

THE METAPHYSICS OF HIERARCHY



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TRADITION

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HIERARCHY AND DEMOCRACY

Introductory Note to the Second Edition

Evolutionism rests entirely on a logical impossibility, since it is impossible for more to come from less and the superior from the inferior. But is there not a similar difficulty in explaining involution? How is it possible for the superior to degenerate?" The answer given to this question, which sums up the meaning of the "problem of decadence," is that the only determining cause in the process of spiritual destruction consists in a "metaphysical decision" directed against the hierarchical principle inherent in human nature: the denial of hierarchy in oneself is a preliminary state to the denial of hierarchy in the political order. Democracy, like other historical forms in which the anti-traditional spirit appears, reveals itself to be a direct consequence of this "killing of hierarchy." It is therefore linked to a complete reversal of the "normal" order, being the supremacy of number; a supremacy that exists only in the world of quantity.

A radical opposition to the democratic mentality cannot be separated from a revival of the aristocratic spirit, whose "Olympian" substance characterizes its authenticity in relation to the bourgeois counterfeits of elitism.

"Asceticism of power" is the formula that expresses the effects of the aristocratic spirit in the political sphere: "This is how a new anti-intellectual, ascetic, heroic ruling group can be formed, almost feudal and barbaric in its harshness and uncompromising forms, silent, tight-knit, and impersonal like an Order..."

Foreword

The friends of the “Ur Group” — editors of the collection — have urged the Publisher to publish the essays contained in this volume, but have refused to disclose the names of the authors.* At the publisher's insistence, these friends argued that indicating the author's name in a text is merely an individualistic motive for the writer and a source of curiosity for the reader — both feelings that are quite common and meaningless (especially in relation to the impersonal character of these texts). The true meaning, we were told, lies in an objective examination of the texts, which are masterful, perfectly organized, and clear.

We have agreed with this point of view: after all, our readers — who are few and qualified — know very well who is (and has been) capable of expounding, with a masterful style, the principles that are accepted in the following writings. Therefore, it will not be difficult for them — assuming they are “curious” — to identify the authors.

These essays need no introductory comments on our part: the reader will find directly in the text what a poor paraphrase would prevent him from discovering.

*The first edition of this work did not indicate the authors.

The Problem of Decadence

One of the most characteristic dogmas of so-called “modern thought” in all its scientific, rationalist, enlightenment, and positivist appendages was the myth of “progress,” the interpretation of history as an uninterrupted “evolution” of humanity, conceived in a uniform manner, with every articulation of the human race in terms of spiritual ideas, traditions, castes, and hierarchical-traditional units being considered by such “modern thought” as belonging to stages surpassed by this supposed “evolution.” It is well known that, under the force of tragic experiences, such a “myth” has now had its day: although it is often preserved in the methodological assumptions of various scientific disciplines, the domains of culture and science being the last bastions of resistance of every outdated cycle of civilization, the evolutionary and progressive myth, as far as the political and social reality and the general vision of history are concerned, appears today to be entirely discredited; and among the new forces permeating the consciousness of these hard and tragic times, there is no shortage of tendencies that more or less revive opposing views, proper to all the major ancient traditions, to which the “evolutionist” myth being entirely foreign to them, they have instead their own sense of a process of decline, of slow obscurity, or of the fall of a higher, primordial world. The fact that the traditions of the most diverse peoples have individually and impersonally agreed on such a view, not only in general but also in the details, is, to a large extent, proof that this is not merely a

philosophical attitude; in connection with this, the revival of such ideas should not be judged—as is erroneously believed in certain circles—as the contingent product of a certain pessimistic state of mind, as a kind of reflection of a state of crisis, but rather as the premonition, albeit confused in most cases, of something much more real.

Those who wish to explore this new, yet at the same time traditional, anti-evolutionist idea cannot, however, avoid tackling a further line of research, primarily that relating to the mystery of decadence.

Formulated in a non-radical way, the problem cannot be said to be new. For example, there is no one who, faced with the grandiose vestiges of magnificent civilizations, of which sometimes not even the name has come down to us, but which often even in their monumental traces seem to reflect on earth the greatness and power of superterrestrial things, has not asked themselves the question of the death of civilization.

Count Gobineau, the father of racism, is responsible for one of the best approaches to this problem and, at the same time, for a masterly and well-documented critique of all the main reasons proposed to explain the phenomenon. However, the solution that Gobineau proposes, in our opinion, has little persuasive force, and the part of it that is correct needs to be supplemented with considerations of a higher order. As is well known, for Gobineau, a civilization develops, subsists, and dominates as long as the race that created it remains pure at its center; it declines and dissolves as soon as this purity is lost, the blood mixes, and chaos ensues. Elsewhere¹ it has been explained why such a

thesis is insufficient and ultimately confuses cause and effect: since we believe that the creative virtues of every superior race cannot be explained solely by the simple biological factor, which is merely consequential. Here, we will limit ourselves to pointing out that in many cases a civilization declines even where there is no interbreeding, even where the original race has remained sufficiently pure. This is particularly evident in certain savage populations caught up in a fatal process of slow death, even though ethnically they have remained closed in on themselves almost like islands. There are closer examples: Stapel, for example, recalled that the Swedes and Dutch, ethnically, as a race, are today more or less what they were two centuries ago, yet today there is hardly even a shadow left of their heroic civilization of that time. Other great civilizations, with their respective states, sometimes seem to survive only as mummies: without any visible alterations, they died long ago and survive only as shadows of themselves:

Thus, the slightest shock is enough to reduce them to dust. Among those best known to us, a typical case is offered by ancient Peru, that magnificent, immense “solar” empire, which was destroyed by a handful of adventurers.

The mystery of decadence becomes even darker when viewed from a strictly doctrinal perspective. In such a context, it is necessary to start from a dualism of types of civilization, and consequently also of the state. On the one hand, there are traditional civilizations, different in form but identical in principle: these are civilizations in which spiritual and super-individual forces and values constitute the axis and supreme point of reference for hierarchical

organization and for the formation and justification of every subordinate reality. On the other hand, there is modern civilization, identical to anti-tradition, a pure construction of human, earthly, individualistic or collectivist factors, the complete development of everything that can be achieved by a life entirely divorced from the “superlife.” René Guénon is responsible for a classic exposition and exhaustive justification of this fundamental view of the morphology of civilization. That being said, the meaning of history is one of decline, because it shows us the disappearance of previous “traditional” civilizations and the increasingly precise advent of a new common civilization of the “modern” type. Here, a double problem arises. How, in general, has this been possible?

Of course, it is easy to propose simple analogies as a solution: a healthy man can become ill; the virtuous can become vicious; a natural law, which surprises no one, causes every organism, after birth, development, and strength, to age, weaken, and die, and so on. But all this is an observation, not an explanation, even admitting that there is a complete analogy between the two orders of things: something doubtful in states and civilizations, since the forces of will play a very different role than in natural phenomena.

The mystery, we were saying, is twofold, because it is not only a matter of explaining decay within a given world, but also the possibility that decay, once established in a given world, has been able to overwhelm and involve everything else. To express ourselves more concretely, we

will say that, for example, it is not only necessary to explain how the ancient traditional Western reality could have degenerated and given rise to modern civilization, but also how it was able to become the mistress of almost the entire earth, diverting various peoples from all other forms of civilization and establishing itself even where states with “traditional” characteristics seemed to exist—and in this regard, it suffices to mention the Indo-European civilizations of the East, not to mention Islam and China.

On this last point, it is not enough to say that it is only a material and political conquest, for two reasons. First of all, because, in the long run, a country that has been conquered materially cannot help but be influenced by other factors emanating from the type of civilization of its conquerors. and in fact we see that European conquest has spread a ferment of Europeanization, that is, of modernization, materialization, and an anti-traditional and individualistic spirit, almost everywhere. Secondly—and here we touch on an essential point—the traditional conception of civilization and the state is hierarchical, not dualistic. Those who profess it cannot unreservedly subscribe to “Render unto Caesar” and “My kingdom is not of this world.” For us, “tradition” is the victorious and creative presence in the world of that which “is not of this world”, that is, of the spirit, conceived as something stronger than any purely material and simply human force. The antithesis between spirit and power, the split between force and authority, is, once again, only a feature of “modern” thinking.

Once this is admitted, as it must be admitted from a strictly traditional point of view, it is clear that one cannot simply speak, almost with a shrug of the shoulders, of a merely material conquest. Material conquest appears to us instead as a spiritual “retreat” in the order of civilizations that have been defeated and have lost their autonomy. Wherever the spirit, conceived as tradition wants it, that is, as the strongest of forces, had been truly present, it would not have lacked the means, more or less invisible, direct or indirect, to overcome any technical and material superiority. We must therefore think that in what the modern West has been able to achieve, traditional appearances concealed a degeneration that was already underway. The West would then appear as the civilization in which a crisis that was already general took on its most acute form, in which the decadence proper to “modern thought,” so to speak, “precipitated” and, by organizing itself, was able to carry over more or less easily to other peoples, in which, although they were in much less advanced stages of involution, tradition no longer possessed its original strength and for this reason they found themselves predisposed to suffer the force of events from outside.

By virtue of this consideration, the second aspect of the problem would lead back to the first: it would only remain to explain the meaning and possibility of degeneration from within, decadence as a phenomenon susceptible to occurring in a given civilization or in a given traditional state, without the concurrence of external factors connected with the forms of other civilizations or other states.

In order to arrive at something positive in this regard, we must first clarify a very important point concerning the essence of hierarchy. That is, we must reject the idea, tendentiously put into circulation by “modern thought,” according to which the hierarchies proper to “traditional” civilizations arose from a kind of imposition, direct control, and violent domination of what was considered superior over what was inferior. This view is purely modern, completely foreign to the character of ancient civilizations and, we might even say, of any normal civilization. Traditional teaching has in fact conceived spiritual action as “acting without acting”; it has spoken of an “immobile mover”; it has always used the symbolism of the “pole,” the immutable axis around which every orderly movement of things subject to it takes place; it has emphasized the “Olympian” attribute of true spirituality and true sovereignty and their way of imposing themselves directly, not by violence but by presence; finally, it has sometimes used the image of the “magnet,” in which, as in a magnet, the true spiritual and true sovereign forces are present and act, and in which, as we shall now see, lies the key to the whole problem.

In his work on “The Doctrine of Fascism,” Carlo Costamagna had the merit of emphasizing concepts not far from this fundamental truth. Opposing the theory of the violent origin of the state, Costamagna sought to eliminate “the confusion between the idea of force and the idea of violence that has vitiated the entire attitude of modern thought on the problem: because it has prevented it, above all, from recognizing that the very content of power is not at all that of physical prevalence but, first and foremost, of

moral prevalence which is not justified by submission, but rather by the adherence of the governed”². He also pointed out that in the same currents of anti-Marxist and anti-bourgeois counterrevolution, “the circumstance of acting and sacrificing oneself in the name of something that is no longer the individual, that no longer considers either the animal instinct to live or utility; that is, the circumstance of living a life that transcends the material fact of living.” This is indeed the central point of the true hierarchical idea: for which one fights against the “superstition” that individual life is the basis of everything and that one can assume something that is more than life as the point of reference of moral experience and simultaneously as the goal of political activity.³ What Costamagna points to as the principle for a new “anti-modern” order is in fact the basic principle of all traditional social organization: the political process taken to such an extent that it becomes identified with the very development of human personality and the realization of its higher possibilities.

It is absurd to believe that the true representatives of spiritual authority, that is, of tradition, would run after men to grab them and tie them to their places; that they, in short, “act” and have any direct interest in creating and maintaining those hierarchical relationships by virtue of which they can also visibly appear as leaders. The recognition by the inferior is, on the contrary, the true basis of every normal and traditional hierarchy. It is not the superior who needs the inferior, but the inferior who needs the superior; it is not the leader who needs his followers, but the follower who needs a leader. The essence of hierarchy lies in the fact that in some superior beings there

lives, in the form of presence and actual reality, what in others exists only as a confused aspiration, a premonition, a tendency, whereby the latter are fatally attracted to the former and naturally subordinate themselves to them, in this way subordinating themselves less to something external than to their truer "self." Herein lies the secret of every readiness for sacrifice, of every heroism, of every manly devotion in the world of ancient hierarchies; and, on the other hand, of prestige, authority, calm power, and influence that even the most armed tyrant could never have secured for himself.

To recognize this is also to see in a different light not only the problem of decadence, but also that of the possibility, in general, of every subversive revolution. Do we not hear it repeated that if a revolution has triumphed, it is a sign that the old leaders were weak and that the old ruling classes were degenerate? This is a very one-sided view. One should certainly think so, if one had wild dogs on a chain that eventually took the hand: this would clearly prove that the hands that held those animals back are not, or are no longer, strong enough. But things are different when we reject the theory of the violent origin of the true state and when the starting point is the spiritual hierarchy, whose true foundation we have just indicated. Such a hierarchy can decay and be overthrown in only one case: when the individual decays, when he uses his fundamental freedom to say no to the spirit, to deprive his life of every higher point of reference and establish himself as a stump. Then the contacts are inevitably severed, the metaphysical tension that unified the traditional organism and the political process, which was the counterpart of a

process of elevation and integration of the individual, slackens, every force wavers in its orbit, and in the end—after the vain attempt to replace the lost tradition with rationalistic constructions and utilitarian processes—it breaks free: the peaks remain pure and intact at the top, but the rest, which previously hung suspended from them, will be like an avalanche that, with a movement that is at first imperceptible and then accelerates, loses its stability and plunges down to the bottom, to the level of the valley: socialism, mass collectivism, Bolshevism.

This is the mystery of decadence, this is the mystery of every subversive revolution. The revolutionary began by killing the hierarchy within himself, mutilating himself of those possibilities which corresponded to the inner foundation of the order, which he then goes on to destroy externally. Without a preliminary inner destruction, no revolution—in the sense of anti-hierarchical and anti-traditional subversion—is possible. And since this preliminary phase escapes superficial observation, those who, with obtuse myopia, cannot see and appreciate anything but “facts,” revolutions are usually considered irrational phenomena and even justified by reference to those materialistic-social factors which, in any normal civilization, have never had anything but an absolutely secondary and subordinate function.

When the Catholic myth refers to the fall of “primitive man” and the “rebellion of the angels” to free will, it ultimately refers to the same explanatory principle. This is the terrible power inherent in man to use freedom in the sense of spiritual destruction, to reject everything that can

assure him supernatural dignity. This is a metaphysical decision, of which the whole current that winds its way through history, in the various forms of the anti-traditional, revolutionary, individualistic, humanistic, secular, and finally “modern” spirit, is nothing but the manifestation and—so to speak—the phenomenology. This decision is the only active and determining cause in the mystery of decadence and traditional destruction.

Once this is understood, one is also close to penetrating the meaning of ancient traditions, somewhat enigmatic in nature, relating to leaders who, in a certain sense, already exist, having never ceased to be, and who can be found (themselves, or rather their “faiths”) in the most diverse forms of modernity ceased to be, and who can be found again (themselves, or rather their “faiths”) through actions described in various ways, but always of a symbolic nature; their search is in fact equivalent to reintegrating themselves, to creating a given attitude, whose virtue is analogous to the essential qualities by which a given metal suddenly feels the magnet, discovers the magnet, and is irresistibly oriented and moved toward the magnet. We will limit ourselves to this brief mention, which anyone who wishes to can easily develop further. To deal with this order of ideas in detail and explain the myths to which we have now referred, and which come to us from the highest pre-European antiquity, would take us too far afield. Perhaps on another occasion we will return to the mystery of reconstruction, of the “magic” capable of effectively bringing back the collapsed mass, no longer contained in temporary forms of order, to the immutable peaks that remain suspended and invisible in the heights.

Notes

1. J. Evola: *Revolt Against the Modern World* (Bocca-Milano) chapters X and XXII (author's note).
2. C. Castamagna: *La dottrina del Fascismo* (pp. 278-99) (Author's note).
3. *Op. cit.*, p. 233 (Author's note).
4. *Op. cit.*, pp. 221, 240 (Author's note).

Social Suggestions — Democracy and the “Elite”

According to the views that inform our overall activity, any interest in a purely “social” point of view can only be indirect, because it represents only a fairly distant application of fundamental principles and because, consequently, it is not in this domain that a true “rectification” of the modern world could begin. For if such a “rectification” were carried out in reverse, that is, starting from the consequences instead of the principles, it would necessarily lack a serious basis and would be completely illusory; nothing stable could ever result from it, and one would have to start all over again at every moment, because a preliminary agreement on the essential truths would have been neglected.

This is why it is impossible for us to accord political contingencies, even in the broadest sense of the word, a value other than that of mere outward signs of the mentality of an era; but, even if only in this sense, it would not even be possible to pass completely over in silence the manifestations of modern disorder in the social sphere proper.

In the present state of the Western world, no one is any longer in the position that would normally correspond to him by virtue of his own nature. This is what is meant when we say that castes no longer exist, since caste, understood in its true traditional sense, is nothing other

than individual nature itself, with all the special aptitudes that it implies and that predispose each man to the fulfillment of a given, determined function. From the moment that access to special functions is no longer controlled by any legitimate rule, it necessarily follows that everyone will find themselves doing anything, and often those things for which they are least qualified. The part he will play in society will be determined solely by what is called chance, that is, by the intertwining of all kinds of accidental circumstances. The factor that will intervene least will be precisely the only factor that should count in such cases, namely the actual difference in nature that exists between men.

The cause of all this disorder is the denial of these very differences, which implies that of any true social hierarchy; and this denial may at first be barely conscious and more practical than theoretical, since the confusion of castes preceded their complete abolition: or, in other words, before taking no account of the nature of individuals, one began by denying it, and this denial was subsequently given by moderns in the form of a pseudo-principle under the name of “equality.” It would be too easy to show that equality cannot exist anywhere, for the simple reason that two beings that are at once truly distinct and entirely similar in every respect cannot exist; it would be no less easy to highlight all the absurd consequences that derive from this chimerical idea, in the name of which it has been claimed to impose complete uniformity everywhere, for example, by distributing the same education to everyone, as if everyone were equally capable of understanding the same things and as if, in order to make them understand

these things, the same methods were valid for everyone without distinction. On the other hand, one may well ask whether it is really a matter of “learning” rather than “understanding,” that is, whether memory has not replaced intelligence in the entirely verbal and “bookish” conception of teaching, where the aim is merely to accumulate rudimentary and heterogeneous notions, and where quality is entirely sacrificed to quantity. In this regard, there would be much to say about the misdeeds of “compulsory education,” but this is not the place to dwell on these things, and in order not to go beyond the limits we have set ourselves, we must content ourselves with pointing out in passing this special consequence of “egalitarian” theories as one of those instruments of disorder which are now too numerous to be enumerated without omission.

Of course, when we are faced with an idea such as “equality,” or “progress,” or other secular dogmas that almost all of our contemporaries accept blindly, and most of which began to take shape in the course of the 18th century, it is impossible to admit that such ideas arose spontaneously. In short, they are true suggestions, in the strictest sense of the word, which, moreover, could only have acted in an environment already prepared to receive them; they did not create the state of mind that characterizes the modern era as a whole, but they have largely contributed to nourishing and developing it to such an extent that it would undoubtedly not have been achieved without them. If these suggestions were to vanish, the general mindset would soon change direction: this is why they are so carefully maintained by all those who have any interest in preserving disorder, if not to aggravate it,

and it is also for this reason that in an age when everything is supposed to be open to discussion, these ideas are the only ones that, for a long time, have not been allowed to be discussed, and that to this day have been discussed only in aspects that are, in essence, partial and consequential. On the other hand, it is difficult to determine exactly the degree of sincerity of all those who have spread these ideas; to know to what extent some have ended up believing their own lies and influencing themselves while influencing others. In propaganda of this kind, the deluded are often the best tools, because they bring a conviction that others can only feign with difficulty and that is easily contagious. But behind all this, at least originally, there must be a much more conscious action, a plan that can only come from men who are perfectly aware of the scope of the ideas they are putting into circulation.

We have spoken of “ideas,” but such a word is very improperly applied here, since it is evident that we are not dealing here with pure ideas, nor even with anything that can be more or less referred to the intellectual order. They are, if you like, false ideas, or better still, “pseudo-ideas,” intended mainly to provoke emotional reactions, which is in fact the most effective and easiest way to influence the masses. In this respect, the word has a much greater importance than the notion it is supposed to represent, and most modern “idols” are nothing more than words, producing the singular phenomenon known as “verbalism,” where the sound of words is enough to create the illusion of thought. The influence that demagogic orators exert on crowds is particularly characteristic here, and it is not necessary to study it closely to realize that it is

precisely a process of suggestion comparable to that of hypnotists.

But, without dwelling on this line of thought, let us return to the consequences of the denial of any true hierarchy and note that, in the present state of affairs, not only does a man only exceptionally and almost accidentally fulfill his proper function, when the opposite should normally be the exception, but it even happens that the same person is called upon to perform completely different functions, as if his aptitudes could change at will. This may seem paradoxical in an age of extreme “specialization” such as ours, and yet this is precisely the case, especially in the political sphere: if the competence of “specialists” is often illusory and in any case limited to a very narrow field, belief in such competence is nevertheless a fact, and one may wonder how it is that such a belief has not been undermined by the experience of the past or did not play any part when it came to the politicians of previous regimes, where complete incompetence was rarely an obstacle. However, on reflection, it is easy to see that this should come as no surprise, that it is, in short, a very natural result of the “democratic” conception, according to which power comes from below and is essentially based on the majority, which necessarily has as its corollary the exclusion of all real competence: competence always being at least relative superiority, which can only belong to a minority. But what we have mentioned with regard to power acquired solely through suggestive procedures also allows us to recognize that evil often persists even in systems that appear to be authoritarian in form.

With regard to “democracy,” it is worth recalling here the decisive argument against it: the superior cannot come from the inferior. It is important to note that the same argument, applied in another context, also applies against “materialism,” and this concordance is not accidental, since the two things are much more closely related than might appear at first glance. It is too obvious that the people cannot confer a power that they themselves do not possess; true power can only come from above, and it is for this reason—let us say in passing—that it can only be legitimized by the sanction of something superior to the social order, that is, by a spiritual authority: otherwise, it is nothing but a counterfeit of power, a state of affairs that cannot be justified by any principle, and therefore only capable of giving rise to disorder and confusion. This reversal of all normal hierarchy begins at the point where temporal power seeks to make itself independent of spiritual authority and then seeks to subordinate it to itself, claiming that it must serve political ends, in the lowest and most conditioned sense of the term. Once the first usurpation has been committed, it opens the way to all others. “One could show, for example, that the French monarchy, starting in the 14th century, worked unconsciously to prepare the revolution that was to overthrow it. Perhaps on another occasion we will be able to develop this point as it deserves, which here can only be touched upon.

If we define “democracy” as the self-government of the people, we are evoking an impossibility, something that cannot even have a simple factual existence, as little today as in any other era. We must not be deceived by words: it is

contradictory to admit that the same men can be both rulers and ruled, because, to use Aristotelian language, the same being cannot be simultaneously, and in the same relationship, “in act” and “in potency.” This is a relationship that necessarily presupposes two terms: there are no governed where there are no rulers, even if they are illegitimate and have no other right to power than that which they have attributed to themselves. But the great skill of leaders in the modern world, is to make the people believe that they govern themselves; and the people allow themselves to be persuaded all the more readily because they feel flattered and, moreover, are incapable of the reflection necessary to realize that this is impossible. It is to create this illusion that “universal suffrage” was invented: it is the opinion of the majority that is supposed to make the law, and no one notices that opinion is something very easy to direct and modify. With appropriate suggestions, currents can always be provoked in one direction or another. We no longer know who spoke of “manufacturing opinion,” an expression that is truly apt, although it must be said that it is not always the apparent leaders who actually have the means at their disposal to achieve this result.

This leads us directly to say in what terms the idea that the majority should make the law is essentially erroneous, because even if, by force of circumstance, this idea is above all theoretical and cannot correspond to an actual reality, it nevertheless remains to be explained how it has been able to take root in the modern spirit, what tendencies of the latter it corresponds to, and that it, at least in appearance, satisfies. The most obvious flaw is the one just mentioned:

the opinion of the majority can only be the expression of incompetence resulting from a lack of intelligence or from pure and simple ignorance. In this regard, certain observations on the subject of “collective psychology” could also be made, and above all the well-known fact that, in a crowd, the sum of the mental reactions produced by the individuals who compose it forms a result that does not even correspond to the average level, but to that of the lowest elements. It should also be noted that some modern philosophers have sought to transpose the “democratic” theory into the intellectual realm, making what they call “universal consensus” a supposed “criterion of truth.” Even supposing that there are indeed questions on which all men agree, this agreement, in itself, would prove nothing. In this domain, it appears even more clearly that the theory lacks a basis, because it is easier to disregard the influence of sentiment, which instead comes into play almost inevitably when it comes to the political domain: and this influence is one of the main obstacles to the understanding of certain things, even among those who would have sufficient intellectual capacity to arrive at such an understanding without difficulty: emotional impulses prevent reflection, and one of the most vulgar skills of low politics is that of taking advantage of such an incapacity.

But let us go deeper into the question: what exactly is this law of the majority invoked by modern regimes not only under the banner of yesterday's democracy, but also under that of various current “social,” “collectivist,” or “totalitarian” currents? It is simply the law of matter, of brute force, the very law by which a mass carried by its own weight crushes everything in its path. This is precisely

where the interference between the democratic-collectivist conception and materialism occurs, and it is no accident that the latter conception is so closely linked to the current mentality. It is the complete reversal of the normal order, being the proclamation of the supremacy of multiplicity as such, a supremacy which, in fact, exists only in the material world (*numerus statur ex parte materiae*, as St. Thomas Aquinas already warned). In the spiritual world, and even more simply in the universal order, it is unity that stands at the summit of the hierarchy, since it constitutes the principle from which all multiplicity derives. But when the principle is denied or lost sight of, only pure multiplicity remains, which is identified with matter itself. Moreover, our allusion to weight is more than a simple simile, since weight actually represents, in the realm of physical forces, the downward and compressive tendency that creates an ever-greater limitation in being, which simultaneously goes in the direction of multiplicity, represented here by an ever-increasing density: and this tendency gives the direction in accordance with which human activity has developed since the beginning of the modern era. Furthermore, if we note that matter, by its power of division and at the same time of limitation, is what scholasticism calls the “principle of individuation,” this brings the considerations now expounded back to what we have said elsewhere about modern individualism: the tendency now indicated is, one might say, the “individualizing” tendency, according to which what Catholic tradition designates as the “fall” of beings separated from their original unity takes place. Multiplicity considered outside its principle, and therefore no longer

capable of being brought back to unity, is, in the order, the community conceived as the simple sum of the individuals who compose it, and which is effectively nothing more than this when it is no longer connected to any principle higher than the individuals; the law of the community, in this respect, is precisely the law of the majority on which the various forms of democracy and collectivism are based.

Here, we must pause for a moment to avoid possible confusion. Taking the term “individualism” in its strictest sense, one would be tempted to oppose the community to the individual and to think that the phenomena relating to the collectivization and centralization of certain modern political forms indicate a tendency opposite to individualism. This is not the case, since the community, being nothing more than the sum of individuals, cannot be opposed to the latter: I in the same way that any form of state cannot be opposed to them, since, not reflecting any higher principle, however centralized it may be, it always remains a collective manifestation (a typical example is Soviet authoritarian-centralist collectivism). Now, it is precisely in the denial of any super-individual principle that individualism truly consists. Therefore, if conflicts arise in the social sphere between different tendencies that all belong equally to the modern spirit, these conflicts are not between individualism and something else, but simply between the multiple varieties of which individualism itself is capable, or, ultimately, between forces that have as we have defined them, their point of departure. And it is easy to see that, in the absence of any principle capable of truly unifying multiplicity, such conflicts in our age must be more serious and more numerous than could have

occurred before: whoever says individualism necessarily says division, and this division, with the chaos that ensues, is the fatal consequence of an essentially material civilization, matter itself being the root of division and multiplicity.

That said, we must still insist on an immediate consequence of the democratic-collectivist idea, which is the negation of the elite understood in its only legitimate sense. It is not for nothing that “democracy” is opposed to “aristocracy,” the latter term designating precisely, at least in its etymological sense, the power of the elite. This, by definition, can only be a minority, and its power, or, better, its authority, which derives from intellectual and spiritual superiority, has nothing in common with the numerical force on which “democracy” is based and with the irrational forces of collectivism, tendencies whose essential character is to sacrifice the minority to the majority, and therefore also quality to quantity, the elite to the masses. Thus, the guiding function of a true elite and its very existence—since, if it exists, it will necessarily exercise such a function—are radically incompatible with any form of “democracy” and collectivism, the presupposition of such forms being the denial of any hierarchy: the very principle of the democratic-collectivist idea is that any individual is equivalent to another, because they are numerically equal, insofar as they can ever be anything other than numerically equal; or because some principle is chosen, which always has the value of a “myth,” which makes one consider any difference as unreal or subordinate.

A true elite can only be spiritual and intellectual. For this reason, democracy and collectivism can only be established where pure intellectuality no longer exists or has completely lost its traditional super-rational character, as is precisely the case in the world. However, since equality is impossible in practice and it is impossible to automatically eliminate all differences between people, despite all efforts at leveling, a curious illogicality arises whereby false elites, multiple ones at that, are invented to replace the one real elite. And these false elites are based on considerations of eminently relative and contingent superiority, always of a purely material nature. This can easily be ascertained by noting that the social distinction that still counts most in many countries is that based on wealth, that is, on a superiority that is entirely external and exclusively quantitative, the only one, in short, that is compatible with "democracy," since it proceeds from the same point of view as the latter. We cannot add that even many of those who are currently opposed to this state of affairs and who call themselves anti-democratic and anti-individualistic, however good their intentions may be, when they are unable to invoke any principle of a higher order, remain fundamentally incapable of effectively remedying such disorder, even if they do not risk aggravating it by going further and further in the same direction. We have already mentioned the example offered by Sovietism, in which anti-individualism and anti-democracy are coupled with an exaggeration of the egalitarian tendency, precisely at the point where all points of reference for a higher order have degenerated.

These simple reflections suffice to characterize the social state in which, despite everything, large parts of the contemporary world still find themselves, and to show at the same time that, in this domain as in all others, there is only one way out of chaos: to restore intellectuality to its spiritual and super-individual meaning, which it has always had in every normal civilization, and thus to rebuild an “elite” that is currently considered non-existent in the West, because such a name cannot be given to some isolated element without cohesion, which in a certain sense represents only an undeveloped possibility. In fact, these elements generally have only tendencies or aspirations, which undoubtedly lead them to react against the modern spirit, but without their influence being able to be exercised effectively. What they lack is true knowledge, traditional data, which cannot be improvised and to which an intellect left to itself, especially in circumstances so unfavorable, can only make an imperfect and very weak contribution, so unfavorable, can only supply imperfectly and to a very limited extent. These are therefore only scattered efforts that often come to nothing because of a lack of principles and spiritual direction. One might say that the modern world defends itself by means of its own dispersion, from which even its adversaries cannot escape. And so things will remain as long as they remain on “profane” ground, where the modern spirit has a clear advantage, since it is its own exclusive domain. And besides, if they remain on this ground, it means that this spirit, despite everything, exerts a strong influence on them.

This is why many, although animated by unquestionable good will, are incapable of understanding that it is necessary to start from the principles, and instead persist in dissipating their energies in this or that relative domain, social, economic, etc., where nothing lasting and real can be achieved in our present conditions. The true elite, on the other hand, must not intervene directly in these areas or interfere in external action. It will direct everything through an influence that is imperceptible to the common man, and all the more profound the less it is apparent. If we think of the power of social suggestions, which we mentioned above, and which nevertheless do not presuppose any real spiritual force, we may suspect what would be even more powerful than an influence such as this, exerted, by its very nature, in an even more hidden way, and drawing its origin from pure intellectuality: a power which, moreover, instead of being diminished by the division inherent in multiplicity and by the weakness inherent in all that is falsehood or illusion, would instead be intensified by its concentration in the unity of the principle and would identify itself with the very force of truth.

On the Essence and Current Function of the Aristocratic Spirit

1. — There is an aristocratic spirit, and there are various manifestations of it, linked to time and space. These manifestations, as such, are contingent in nature, have a genesis, a development, and possibly even an alteration and a decline. The aristocratic spirit, however, is superior and prior to each of them. It corresponds to a degree of reality, to a primordial function in the whole. It therefore has a super-historical nature and can even be said to be metaphysical. As such, it persists beyond the birth and decline of historical aristocracies, which may embody it more or less perfectly in a given period and in the cycle of a given civilization and a given race.

Like the idea of the Regnum, or that of order, or that of tradition, the aristocratic idea has its own consecration and legitimacy within itself. There is already twilight in the inner life of men when the supposition arises that it is “history” that creates a Regnum, an aristocracy or a tradition, and that one and the other are justified and valid on the basis of contingent factors, or of purely material utility or domination, or of suggestion. History, and in general everything that is simply human, can only offer the dynamis, the profound force that, in certain circumstances, allows a Regnum to form and the aristocratic spirit to manifest itself. But, in its deepest essence, this manifestation is shrouded in mystery: it is the mystery that always asserts itself wherever the paths from above meet

those from below, wherever correspondences are established between the peaks of human ascents and the outlets of influences that are more than human. These points of interference are the fateful moments of history. They are the points at which what is symbol becomes reality and what is reality becomes symbol, at which what is spirit becomes power and what is power becomes spirit.

2. — One of the tactics most used by the secret forces of world subversion is the substitution of the person for the principle. Wherever the aim is to disrupt a traditional order, these forces spy on the moment when a certain decadence becomes apparent in the historical representatives of the fundamental principles of that order. This is the most opportune moment for subversive action: everything is done to ensure that the process brought against individuals extends imperceptibly to the principles they represent, so that these are discredited and considered obsolete and in need of replacement by others more or less imbued with subversion. This tactic has long been used against a certain traditional European aristocracy. The undeniable degeneration of part of this aristocracy has been the most useful tool for an attack on the aristocratic spirit itself: it did not lead to demands that this decadent aristocracy be discredited and replaced by another that was worthy of the idea from which it alone could derive its authority and *raison d'être*, but led to the rejection of this idea in favor of lower forces and ideas.

This, moreover, was only one episode in a broader process of subversion and involution, which it is worth briefly recalling here. Consider the four fundamental

degrees of the ancient social hierarchy: spiritual leaders, warrior aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and workers. The degeneration of the first degree did not serve to impose unworthy spiritual leaders replaced by other worthy representatives of the same principle, but it was a valuable pretext by which the second degree, the warrior aristocracy, was led to usurp and assume the authority that was legitimately theirs alone. At a later stage, the degeneration of part of the warrior aristocracy did not result in an uprising aimed at its restoration, but rather in a second usurpation, this time by the third estate, which replaced the warrior nobility as a bourgeois plutocracy. Finally, the degeneration of the third estate system, of the bourgeoisie and capitalism did not lead to the appropriate elimination of its diseased and parasitic growths, but, once again, through it, a process was invented against the principle, paving the way for an attempt at further usurpation by the fourth estate, the materialized and proletarianized world of the masses (Marxism, Bolshevism).

3. — From this brief historical summary, it is clear that knowledge of the essence and importance of the aristocratic spirit is fundamental to the struggle against subversion and for a correct orientation, especially at a point such as that at which “Western civilization” currently finds itself.

Today, certain forces have lined up spiritually and materially against bourgeois civilization and spirit, against plutocracy, against capitalism. They want the end of the “bourgeois era.” However, there are two ways, not only different but even antithetical, of rejecting the bourgeoisie

and bringing about the end of the bourgeois era. Following the first, the bourgeoisie with all its derivatives must be overcome to give way to the rule of the masses. From another point of view, however, the true overcoming of the bourgeoisie is a return to an aristocratic idea, that is, an idea which, on the one hand, due to the degeneration of some of its representatives and, on the other, due to usurpation, had been replaced by the hegemony of the bourgeoisie and the idols of the bourgeoisie: capital, gold, the economy without a homeland and without a face.

This same alternative can be clarified from a further point of view. These forces undeniably have aspects of “totalization” and socialization, outwardly similar to those that are also characteristic of the Marxist-Communist social “ideal.” To what extent do these forces belong to the end of a cycle, which is characterized precisely by a regression from what is differentiated, qualitative, and personal to the anonymity of the collective? To answer this question, we must make it clear that the phenomenon of totalitarianism and state concentration has two opposite meanings depending on its “direction” and the type of social regime that preceded it. But in this regard, the fundamental test today is once again the aristocratic idea.

Let us suppose that the order that existed prior to “totalization” was that of a society that was well articulated—not artificially, but by natural vocation—into strata that were not closed and contrasting, but acted in an orderly manner in concert within a hierarchical whole. let us also conceive that the differentiation and anti-collectivism of such a society are also expressed through a certain division

of power and sovereignty, in a certain division of functions and particular rights, over which, however, the central authority reigns supreme, strengthened rather than diminished in its pure, immaterial principle precisely through this partial decentralization. If centralism and totalitarianism were to assert themselves in such a society, they would mean destruction and disarticulation, a regression from the organic to the amorphous. To gather all power absolutistically at the center would mean, in such a case, to refer every function and activity of the body directly to the brain, thereby creating the condition of those lower animals, which consist only of a head and an inarticulate and undifferentiated body. This is precisely the meaning of anti-aristocratic and levelling absolutism, which was methodically pursued, under the pressure of various circumstances, above all by the kings of France. It is no coincidence that it was in France, through the Jacobin revolution, that demagogy and the advent of the third estate first appeared. Those absolutist kings and enemies of the aristocracy literally dug their own graves. While on the one hand their dignity became secularized and lost its original consecration, centralizing, dismantling, and disarticulating the state, replacing virile, direct forms of authority, responsibility, and partial, personal sovereignty with a bureaucratic-state superstructure, they created a vacuum around themselves, because the vain court aristocracy could no longer mean anything and the military aristocracy was now deprived of its power. Once the differential structure that acted as an intermediary between the nation and the sovereign was destroyed, what remained was the nation as a mass, detached from the

sovereign and his secularized sovereignty. With a single blow, the revolution easily swept away that superstructure and placed power in the hands of the pure mass. This is an example of the involutive direction of the process of state totalization.

The case is different when the antecedent of the process of authoritarian concentration is not an organic, hierarchical, and differentiated order, but rather a society in dissolution, as occurred in the modern era. Liberalism, democracy, rationalism, and internationalism have reduced nations to a state of unstable masses that scatter in all directions, reaching the bottom of the slope represented by Marxism and Bolshevism. Faced with such a state of affairs, the first and most urgent task is clearly to create, by any means necessary, a barrier, a brake, to neutralize the centrifugal tendency with a centripetal political force. And it is precisely this meaning that should be attributed to the process of totalization to which these forces tend. However, this is a preliminary task, the main one being to rearticulate the nation brought back to itself, unified under the sign of various myths and symbols: it is a question of removing it from all collectivism and giving rise to a well-established, well-formed hierarchical structure with a distinct emphasis on the principle of personality and, moreover, on true spiritual authority.

But recognizing this also means recognizing that it is precisely the aristocratic idea, as a direction, that differentiates the two cases; that is, it is the idea according to which currents that historically belong to the end of a cycle differ sharply from other currents which already

represent the principle of resurrection and reconstruction beyond internationalism and the collapse of collectivism.

4. — Since the aristocratic spirit is prior to and superior to all its manifestations, the problem of any concrete aristocratic formation presupposes a thorough understanding of the very essence of that spirit. It must be borne in mind that, for reconstruction, it is not simply a question of a political class more or less connected with the administrative or legislative body of the state. It is first and foremost a matter of prestige and example which, connected to a very specific stratum, must be able to create an atmosphere, crystallize a superior lifestyle, awaken special forms of sensitivity, and thus set the tone for a new society. One might therefore think of a kind of Order, in the virile and ascetic sense that this term had in medieval Ghibelline civilization. But one might even better think of the most ancient Aryan and Indo-Aryan societies, where it is known that the elite was in no way materially organized, that it did not derive its authority from representing any tangible power or abstract principle, but nevertheless maintained its rank firmly and set the tone for the corresponding civilization by means of a direct influence emanating from its essence.

The modern world knows many counterfeits of elitism, from which we must distance ourselves. The aristocratic spirit is essentially anti-rationalistic. For example, we must take a clear stand against the so-called “aristocracy of thought.” The superstitious cult of “thought” is typical of the bourgeois civilization we are fighting against, which invented it and spread it for specific polemical reasons. In

contrast to the last remnants of the aristocracy of blood and spirit, bourgeois civilization, having consolidated itself with the advent of the third estate, invented the right of the “true” aristocracy, which was precisely that of “thought” and in which the “noble” principles prepared by Masonic Enlightenment played a major role. The return to a true aristocratic civilization presupposes the overcoming of this bourgeois myth.

What is this “aristocracy of thought”? It boils down largely to the famous “intellectuals”, the creators of brilliant but arbitrary “philosophies”, poets, writers and humanists, in short, more or less those whom Plato, faced with the true leaders and the true “wise men”, rightly wanted to banish from his state, which was not at all—as is commonly believed—a utopian model, but reflected what was traditionally always considered normal in terms of political order. It is enough to formulate the idea that an elite of intellectuals, humanists, and thinkers, who may also be, by character, cowards and little more than petty bourgeois, should be at the top of a civilization, to feel the absurdity and anachronism not only in the face of the problem of the true aristocratic spirit, but also with regard to the anti-rationalism that animates the forces mentioned above.

5. — Now that the smoke of progressive and scientific Enlightenment has cleared, we must also distance ourselves from an “aristocracy of thought” conceived as being composed of scientists, inventors, and technicians. All of these are undoubtedly useful and indispensable elements for a modern society, and a new idea of the state, which

will replace the demoparliamentary one, is characterized by the affirmation of the principle of competence in the political sphere itself. However, it is also clear that even this aristocracy cannot represent the appropriate substance for the core of a new civilization beyond the bourgeois and collectivist one. Much closer to Marxism and Bolshevism is the idea that an elite of technicians, intent on solving purely material, social, and economic problems, can enlighten the collectivized humanity they serve and guide it toward a new paradise, so much so that they can claim superior recognition.

6. — There is not even any identity between the aristocratic spirit and a generically authoritarian or dictatorial idea. The very existence of a term such as “dictatorship of the proletariat” shows today the need to be specific about dictatorships and authoritarianism. Some have tried to demonstrate that the phenomenon of elitism, that is, of a ruling minority, is inevitable in history. This author — Pareto — spoke in this regard of a “circulation of elites,” which replace one another, emerging by means of a more or less analogous technique of domination, using various ideas, which, in this sense, are less real ideas than myths, that is, well prepared centers of crystallization for irrational suggestive forces.

Elitism, in this sense, would appear to be a purely formal concept: a certain stratum is an “elite” insofar as it is in power and succeeds in exerting a certain influence, whereas the normal conception is that a certain stratum must be in power and must be allowed to exercise a certain influence, because it is an elite, that is, a selected group

(elite from *eligo*) having in itself a superiority, prestige, and authority inseparable from immutable principles, a given lifestyle, and a given essence.

The true aristocratic spirit cannot have anything in common with forms of rule based on Machiavellian or demagogic principles, as was the case in ancient popular tyrannies and in the tribuneship of the plebs. Nor can it be based on a theory of the “superman,” if one were to think only of power based on purely individual and naturalistic qualities of violent and fearsome figures. In its most intimate principle, the substance of the aristocratic spirit is instead “Olympian”—we have already said that it derives from an already metaphysical order.

The basis of the aristocratic type is primarily spiritual. The meaning of spirituality here, however, has little to do with the modern notion of it: it is connected to an innate sense of sovereignty, a contempt for profane, common, acquired things, born of skill, ingenuity, erudition, and even genius; a contempt which is very similar to that professed by the ascetic, but differs from it in its complete absence of pathos and resentment. The essence of true noble nature could be summed up in this formula: a superiority of race over life that has become nature. This superiority, which has something of the ascetic, in the aristocratic type does not serve to create antithesis in one's own being; like a second nature, it calmly dominates and permeates the lower human part, translating itself into imperious dignity, strength, “line,” calm and controlled composure of the soul, words, and gestures. This gives rise to a human type whose calm, intangible strength stands in

stark contrast to that of the “Titanic”, Promethean and telluric type. If antiquity symbolically attributed a “celestial,” Uranian origin to all the main strains bearing the aristocratic spirit, this must be understood as a precise recognition of this “Olympian” core of the aristocratic essence. Recall the ancient Aryan-Hellenic conception of the *noûs*: this is not the “spirit” of modern intellectuals, but rather the supernatural element of man, which is to the soul as the sun is to the moon, and is the substance of an immaterial virility, and it was said that the gods reserved the *noûs* for themselves and left restless reason to the majority of men. Thus, in myth, Promethean cunning and audacity can do nothing against the Olympian *noûs*: neither the tragedy of men nor of heroes themselves touches this *noûs*, which towers above it like a calm and steady light. And those who participate in it—it was thought—are truly of royal lineage, and as such also share in the divine commonality proper to the primordial state, and the lineages linked to them constitute the superior races, the super-races, those who have positively resolved the oscillation between the human condition and the more than human condition, which was originally proper to certain earthly lineages. A reflection of these super-historical meanings is always preserved wherever in history there has been a realization of the true aristocratic spirit.

7. — The idea of race is connected — in its deepest and most authentic meanings — with the aristocratic idea. However, we must be careful not to generalize the notion of race is not weakened and emptied of its highest and most traditional meaning. In history, the idea of race has always been closely connected with the aristocratic idea,

and this connection has constantly prevented its materialization into a kind of zoologism. The existence of race has always been synonymous, to a certain extent, with aristocracy. The qualities of "race" have always meant qualities of the elite. They were opposed to the qualities of the common man because they appeared, to a large extent, essential, innate, connected to higher meanings. To clarify these meanings, it is very important to distinguish various aspects of what is generally meant by race. The first aspect is the race of the body, the second is race as soul, and the third is race as spirit. These are three distinct manifestations of the same essence, to which correspond equally distinct inheritances, laws, and limits. While in the first degree race is recognized in a given hereditary form of physical appearance, in the second it manifests itself in a given style of experience, and in the third, in a given form of tradition.

In its highest form of appearance, race is connected to a super-biological element, to gifts and forces which, in their purity, can realize and preserve themselves only in an elite and which would inevitably be lost in the masses. It can thus be said that while race is found in a diffuse form in all members of a given stock, in its higher degrees it is realized only in a given group, which, within that given stock, presents itself simultaneously as the most immediate substance for an incarnation of the aristocratic spirit. Here lives and asserts itself what we may well call the eternal race: the body of this manifestation is tradition, and the true representatives of tradition, which therefore represents the entire soul and metaphysical core of the biological race,

that is, the race as spirit, are in turn the Olympian vein of that lineage, that is, the aristocracy.

Tradition comes from the term *trader*, meaning to transmit. In this sense, there seems to be no limit to the content of the concept, i.e., that everything that has been transmitted can be called tradition. From a higher point of view, however, things are different. In fact, transmission presupposes continuity, an identity of content, which in turn is inconceivable without a certain overcoming of the temporal condition. Therefore, we cannot speak of tradition in a higher sense wherever its content is not linked to something metaphysical and super-temporal. Tradition can have various forms of expression and manifestation, conditioned by different circumstances, sometimes changing, sometimes even apparently contradictory. But if it is not to mean routine, mechanical transmission of customs, habits, and ideas that stratify and become increasingly opaque and subject to deformation, beyond those external forms of expression of tradition there must be a deeper and more continuous vein, and men who have full, clear awareness of this vein. What is needed, therefore, is an esotericism of tradition, which, by its very nature, can only have those elements that are simultaneously the exponents of the aristocratic spirit. Here, ultimately, there is a mutual conditionality: tradition serves as the basis for the aristocratic spirit, just as the aristocratic spirit serves as the basis for tradition, which in turn expresses the eternal race or the eternal in the race.

In this whole, the apex and the most inner and subtle force of a tradition and of the people of a tradition

constitute, in a certain way, the supernational element of a nation or the superrace of a race. From this proceeds a possibility of understanding and solidarity in the true aristocratic spirit, which the traditional past has always demonstrated in the order of peoples of common origin and which is also reflected in some family and racial customs of the former European aristocracy. It is well known that in animal breeding, "pure blood" does not always refer to an animal born of parents of the same species, but can also be the product of crossbreeding between different parents, provided, however, that they are of the same rank and purity. The qualities of pure blood are lost and crossbreeding occurs if it is crossed with an inferior type, even if of the same species. From the intuition of a similar law, operating on a higher level, came the system of supernational intermarriage of various European dynasties and aristocratic families; that is, crossbreeding according to the principle of quality.

Even if this system has its dark sides, at its core there is a reflection of a higher truth: it is the principle of common descent according to the race of the spirit, it is unity and homogeneity that are achieved through the apices, not through promiscuity but through hierarchical culminations, on the basis of the metaphysical and eternal element potentially contained in each of them and inseparable from the substance of the qualified representatives of the true aristocratic spirit.

8. — With regard to contemporary racism, there is a twofold possibility of interpretation that is absolutely analogous to that indicated for the phenomenon of

totalitarian concentration: and here too, the criterion of judgment is provided by the aristocratic spirit.

There are those who believed that political racism could be considered temporary, as a chapter of “humanism” in the most general sense of a conception of the world and of life, at the center of which man essentially stands. Starting with the so-called Renaissance, there has been a systematic tendency to transfer to man the mystique of the divine and, strangely enough, the more man ceased to be considered a privileged being of creation and was no longer studied on the basis of his origin, but as one of many natural species and, in the end, even animals, the more this tendency grew. Thus, the word anthropology, which originally meant the science of man in general, in his physical and spiritual completeness, ended up taking on a new meaning: it was no longer the science of man as such, but of man as a being of nature, to whom methods similar to those of zoology and botany could be applied: it was a natural science of man. But at the same time, the aforementioned tendency to deify man was at work: it can already be seen at work in the deist and Enlightenment-Masonic cult of “humanity,” developing into Bolshevik mysticism of the collective man and technical messianism; but, according to the authors mentioned here, it also appears in very different tendencies, such as the tendency to deify humanity as the substance of a given nation, a given race, or, indeed, as a biological reality, as blood and race.

This interpretation, however, only fits certain extremist forms of racism which, despite having an exclusively

“scientific” character in the modern materialistic and positivistic sense of the term, leave the scientific field to promote a mysticism *sui generis*. But this is not the case for all racism. Already starting with De Gobineau, its fundamentally aristocratic origin is clearly visible: racism established itself in the modern world as a reaction against the morass of democratic egalitarianism and against a materialistic and anti-qualitative climate, which is, after all, the very climate in which scientism itself developed: from which scientism, in a curious reversal, racism, in other aspects, nevertheless had to borrow various weapons and in which it had to seek its alibis. It is quite possible, in racism, to discriminate and isolate the superior tendency just mentioned, to understand in it a principle of revolt against an internationalistic, leveled, rationalistic, and plebeian, and yet to sense in the return to the idea of race—and above all of a superior race or super-race—the revival of a spiritual and aristocratic heritage that we have forgotten or irresponsibly squandered.

Therefore, where racism is influenced solely by humanistic-materialistic components, it may well happen that, in its extremist forms, its ideal place falls precisely at the end of a cycle: having lost the sense of metaphysical reality and of the divine element in man, a certain Western civilization has come to consider man in himself and, subsequently, man as a mere animal species and, bringing him back to race, has made a mysticism out of race as a purely biological reality. But where racism is influenced by the other component—the aristocratic one which, as we have recalled, exerted a definite influence on the early theorists of “male”, “diurnal” and “active” races and on the

general myth of race, Nordic-Aryan and Aryan-Roman domination — the historical place of racism is very different, it can fall at the beginning of a new cycle of reconstruction: while borrowing various weapons from modern science for the defense of the race of the body, racism has here the possibility of using these weapons against the materialistic, democratic and rationalistic conception of the last phases of Western decadence: by affirming, in opposition to this conception, the value of blood, tradition, and race, with the intention of reestablishing differences and hierarchies, racism can have a meaning of restoration and revival of higher values.

It is the aristocratic spirit, moreover, that conditions this higher possibility of modern racism and, properly speaking, it is the organic and profound union already mentioned between the concepts of race and internal gradation of race, tradition and esotericism of tradition and, finally, of a virile and spiritual elite adhering to the ancient Aryan ideal of Olympian superiority.

9. — The fundamental function of a true aristocracy is to set the “tone” of a civilization less by direct action than by means of a “catalytic” action, that is, an action exercised by its mere presence. This idea should not, however, lead to dualism, giving rise to the assumption that those who hold political power should not be members of the aristocracy in question and that, in turn, those who are members of this aristocracy should not have political power. Instead, we must consider a political function of the representatives of the true aristocratic spirit and clarify it with a few brief considerations.

There are far too many people today who consider essential for political qualification a fundamental lack of principles, if not of character, a plasticity and flexibility in the face of the most contingent external circumstances, and a low-grade realism. We believe, on the contrary, that where there are no principles or spiritual values, there can be no talk of a true ruling class, even in the political sense. Now, the role of a true aristocracy of the true state, in this regard, should be to give everyone a sense of solid ground, of an immutable center, superior to changing events and contingencies, from which it must not, of course, abstract itself, but on which it must assert itself in order to bring them back, by the most appropriate means, to the desired directions. Without this, it is impossible to instill confidence in a nation, it is impossible to carry out any educational and formative work in the higher sense: because even the use of “myths,” that is, ideas that are not valid for their intrinsic content but for their confused irrational and subrational suggestive power, is not enough for this.

Because of the participation of representatives of the true aristocratic spirit in the political ruling class, ethical and spiritual values, harmonized and well-founded, should therefore come into balance with material and social values. In this way, these higher values would permeate the whole person, giving direction to all his activities and making possible the formation and uninterrupted preservation of character traits and “race,” of which the political ruling class should be the first to set an example. These qualities are loyalty, sincerity, a sense of honor, courage not only physical but also intellectual and moral,

and strength of decision. But to all this should be added a tendency toward an ascetic lifestyle, a lack of vanity, and a manly and dignified impersonality.

We would like to use this expression: “ascetics of power.” These should be the effects of the aristocratic spirit on the political leaders.

To give a sense of power, it is necessary to make the difference between power and wealth clearly felt. Political power, which in this way will also tend to secure true spiritual authority, must assert itself in complete independence from any power linked to wealth. Not wealth, therefore, but something more: power over wealth. Those who truly have power and are aware of being worthy of it, those who really feel superior, also realize that every form of vanity and personalism lowers them: these are artificial and fictitious forms of self-worth and worth in the eyes of others, which they do not need. They have nothing to do with an Aryan, Nordic-Aryan, or Ario-Roman way of life. This is how a new anti-intellectual, ascetic, and heroic ruling class can be formed, almost feudal and barbaric in its harshness and uncompromising ways, silent, tight-knit, and impersonal like an order, but precisely for this reason realizing a higher form of personality, not improvised, but justified by a “tradition” and a “race” lived in their deepest and most transcendent values.

The forces of this elite must not lose touch with the various levels of national life. Its task will be to ensure that, in the context of various political, national, and international problems, the most precise realization of

temporal goals goes hand in hand with adherence to the fundamental ideas of their own traditions and with respect for those essential values on which human dignity and the very notion of personality are based.

It will therefore also be a matter of internal edification, not unlike that carried out, in civilizations of a different nature, by the administrators of a given faith: with the difference, however, of the rejection of any unilateral and divisive dualism. In the modern world, a rich forest of political myths thrives, and the very word “mysticism” is used in the most diverse and bizarre contexts. However, clichés aside, we live in an age in which it is difficult to give people a sense of the deeper meaning of why they work, submit to all kinds of discipline, procreate, toil, and often offer themselves up to sacrifice or heroic death. In this field, leaders should, through words, example, action, in short, in every way, provide evidence, show the way, and instill in every form of life and action of the new, anti-bourgeois, and anti-collectivist man a higher, transfiguring meaning.

Let us recall a view that is classical and Aryan before being taken up and to some extent altered by the predominant Western faith: there are two states, one large, which encompasses both human and divine forces — *quod dii atque homines continentur* — the other is that in which one is bound by the destiny of birth. “There are beings who serve both states simultaneously, others only the small one, others only the larger one” (Seneca). An ancient Nordic saying is “Whoever is the leader, let there be a bridge” — that is, a connection between two shores,

between two worlds, in order to understand the nature of both: the original, pre-Christian meaning of the term pontifex is the same: “bridge builder” — and the same is true, once again, of the term used in ancient Indo-Aryan civilization to designate the function that all spiritual leaders had in common. This function remains the same for every group of men who, at any point in history, embody the aristocratic spirit in its highest power. This is simultaneously an ethical function: asceticism of power, testimony to a superior human type. And it is also a political function, because it is up to the leaders to indicate the ways in which holding fast in any place in the temporal state can simultaneously take on the meaning of holding fast on the front of the inner and transcendent state, so that in every external enemy one can fight the same enemy that must be conquered within oneself, and, finally, so that even on the level of nations connected by the same destiny and a common origin, unity in honor and loyalty can be achieved, above all particularistic ambitions, all savage will to power, and any insidiousness on the part of the secret forces of world subversion.

In this last aspect lies another reason why understanding the aristocratic spirit today is particularly relevant, why it does not fuel a weak conservatism but encourages a return to living tradition, why it does not instill sterile nostalgia for a past that has come to an end but stimulates a desire for a constructive future. From the considerations briefly outlined here, one may even be led to believe that a new manifestation of the aristocratic spirit in a form appropriate to our times is a condition in which, in a substance that is still dynamic and volcanic, shaken by

the tragic events of a necessary work of demolition still in progress, any negative, collectivizing, and materializing tendencies are prevented, while instead, positive tendencies are increasingly clearly identified: the only ones that can take on a meaning of resurgence, reconstruction, and revival of the highest Aryan-European heritage.

INITIATION AND METAPHYSICS

Preface

The following text entitled *The Limits of Initiatory Regularity*, of great importance and the source of the controversy between Julius Evola and René Guénon, was first published in “Introduction to Magic,” a collection of pamphlets published by the UR Group (Volume III, pp. 160-175 of the Italian edition), whose three volumes were published in Rome in 1971. Signed with the pseudonym EA, this text is undoubtedly by Julius Evola, as demonstrated by his inimitable style, which is not easy to transpose into another language. The present translation corresponds to the 1971 Italian edition. The reason we are publishing this text is to provide those interested in traditional themes with sufficient tools for analysis and evaluation of the subject. The question of “initiatory regularity” is undoubtedly the most controversial point in the entire Guénonian doctrinal corpus and the source of much of the conflict it has suffered. Let each person judge the two positions with serenity, moderation, and objectivity.

The Limits of Initiatory Regularity

Julius Evola

Among the rare writers in the West who, not through erudition but through effective knowledge based on initiation, have contributed to guidance and clarification in the field of esoteric sciences and traditional spirituality, René Guénon occupies a prominent place. In general, we recommend the study of Guénon's works to those of our readers who are not familiar with them, insofar as they are unique in their genre and value, and can serve as a complement to much of what we have presented, at least as far as the essentials are concerned. On the other hand, we have reservations about certain particular aspects, because Guénon's orientation often suffers from a line of thought that differs from that which underlies our formulations and because Guénon's approach is essentially theoretical, whereas ours is fundamentally practical. It will therefore be useful to briefly consider where things stand in this area, so that those who follow us can determine how to make appropriate use of what Guénon has expounded.

As for doctrinal differences, we will simply allude to them without dwelling on them. We do not share Guénon's views on the relationship between real and priestly initiation, on his scheme concerning the Lesser and Greater Mysteries, and finally on the restriction of the term "magic," to which he gives an inferior and pejorative meaning. These three points are, moreover, to some extent

linked to each other. But what we want to deal with here is precisely the general problem of initiation.

Guénonian Outline of Initiatory Regularity

Guénon's point of view is, in summary, as follows. Initiation consists in overcoming the human condition and realizing the higher states of being: something impossible with the mere means of the individual. This could have happened in the distant past and for a type of man very different from the present one; but today, on the contrary, an external intervention would be necessary, namely the transmission of a "spiritual influence" to the aspirant to initiation.

This transmission is effected ritually through a regular initiatic organization. Such is the basic condition: if it is not satisfied, Guénon considers that there is no effective initiation, but only a vain parody of it (the "pseudo-initiation"). The "regularity" of an organization consists in its being linked, either directly or through intermediaries from other centers, to a supreme and unique center. It also consists in referring to an unbroken chain of transmission that continues over time through real representatives, going back to the "primordial tradition." In order for the transmission of spiritual influences, conditioning initiatory development, to be real, it is sufficient that the required rites be performed exactly by the person regularly designated for that function: whether or not the latter understands the required rites, whether or not he believes in their efficacy, is of little importance for the act itself. In these cases, likewise, the chain is not broken and an initiatory organization does not cease to be "regular" or capable of conferring initiation, even when it has only "virtual initiates." As is well known, the Church has a

similar view regarding priestly ordination and the efficacy of regularly performed rites.

As for the candidate for initiation, in order to obtain the transmission of the “ritual influences,” a qualification is required. This qualification concerns either the physical plane, with the absence of certain bodily defects, or a certain mental (“speculative”) preparation, or the presence of a precise aspiration, or, as we prefer to call it, a vocation. It can be said in general that a state of disharmony and imbalance disqualifies one from obtaining initiation. With the transmission of “spiritual influences,” one is transformed into a “virtual initiate.” An inner change takes place, which—like the fact of belonging to the organization to which one adheres—will be indelible and will remain forever.

However, effective initiation requires active, “operative” work of updating, which must be done by oneself and which no teacher can undertake in place of the aspirant (since there are different degrees of initiation, this must be clearly understood for each degree). The representatives of an initiatory organization cannot direct, control, or support this development or prevent possible deviations. The link with higher states of being, established through the transmission of spiritual influences, does not always need to be conscious to be real. In particular, René Guénon makes a clear distinction between mysticism and initiation, since the mystic is not “active” in his experiences: he usually does not even possess the means to interpret them properly (especially since he is an isolated individual and the basic condition for initiation is the link

with a “center” and a “chain,” which is not satisfied at all). Secondly, René Guénon denies any possibility of connection—what he calls “ideal”—with a tradition, that is, any link that is not established through the ritual means indicated above and through contact with living, existing, present, and authorized representatives of that tradition. A “spontaneous” initiation, in short, is also excluded, as it would be equivalent to birth without the help of someone who facilitates the possibility or to the development of a plant without first having a seed, which in turn comes from other plants born from one another.

Such is, in summary, the Guénonian scheme of “initiatory regularity.” Let us now see what can be thought about this.

Criticism of Guénon's Scheme

There is not much to object to in the scheme itself, except that the situation existing for most of those to whom Guénon's writings are addressed is nothing more than an abstract scheme. We can agree with this scheme, but then, when we come down to the question of how to proceed in practice in order to receive initiation, we do not find much light in Guénon's work—quite the contrary. Indeed, Guénon claims that he aspires to nothing more than to clarify the concept of initiation; as for dealing with the initiatory problem itself, that is, knowing to whom one must turn for concrete instructions, this is something that does not concern him in any way, he says, and that cannot, under any circumstances, fall within his remit. Thus, the individual who hears Guénon constantly speak of “initiatic organizations,” as if they existed on every corner, finds himself at a real dead end, if the scheme of “initiatic regularity” were considered truly absolute and exclusive. We are naturally thinking of Western man. In the East—from Islamic countries to Japan—there may still be certain centers that sufficiently preserve the characteristics indicated by Guénon. But this cannot be taken into account, even if someone decided to travel to these places to receive an authentic regular initiation. In fact, one would have to be lucky enough to come into contact with centers of, so to speak, absolutely supratraditional purity, for otherwise it would be a question of initiations whose jurisdiction (as Guénon himself recognizes) is the environment of a given positive religion, which is not ours. Here, it is not a question of “converting” or not; there is a whole set of physical and subtle factors, racial and atavistic,

specific forms of worship and divinity, right down to the factor represented by the mentality and the language itself, which must be taken into consideration. It would be a matter of transplanting oneself into a completely different physical and spiritual environment: something that is not accessible to most people and cannot be achieved by a simple trip.

If, on the contrary, one turns to the tradition that ended up prevailing in the West, nothing could be achieved, since Christianity is a tradition that has been mutilated of its upper, esoteric, and initiatory part. Within traditional Christianity—that is, Catholicism—there is no longer an initiatory hierarchy: here, the prospects are limited to mystical developments through individual initiative and on a charismatic basis. Sporadically, some mystics know how to go further and, on a purely individual basis, manage to rise to the metaphysical plane. We can and must disregard a few rare allusions from the first centuries of our era, or those that have been believed to be found in the Greek Orthodox Church, and which certain Guénonians have set out to hunt down.

If, after acknowledging all this, one wants to look further, what Guénon says is not particularly comforting. Indeed, he recognizes that in our day, in the Western world, there are absolutely no initiatory organizations. Those that did exist have now fallen into a state of complete degeneration, becoming “vestiges misunderstood even by those who direct them.” Moreover, what he adds by way of clarification only increases the perplexity and highlights the dangers that arise from unconditionally

accepting the abstract scheme of “initiatric regularity.” Here we can only express our precise disagreement on two points. The first is that, even through degraded organizations, it would be possible to obtain something resembling a true initiation. For us, the continuity of “spiritual influences” is, in fact, illusory when there are no worthy and conscious representatives of a given chain and when transmission has become almost mechanical.

It is a fact that there is a possibility, in this case, that the truly spiritual influences “withdraw,” which is why what remains and is transmitted is nothing more than something degraded, a simple “psychism,” even open to dark forces, in such a way that adherence to the corresponding organization, for those who truly aspire to the heights, often becomes a disadvantage and a danger, rather than a help. René Guénon does not seem to think the same: he believes that if the outwardly ritual continuity has been maintained, it is always possible to obtain what he calls “virtual initiation.”

More serious is our disagreement when Guénon says that the result of the research he conducted in a bygone era led him to the “formal and unquestionable conclusion” that, apart from the survival of a few groups of Christian Hermeticists from the Middle Ages, among all the organizations with initiatory pretensions that exist today in the West, there are only two that can claim, albeit in a very diminished form, an authentic traditional origin and a real initiatory transmission: the Companionship and Freemasonry. Everything else would be nothing more than charlatanism and emptiness, when it did not serve to

conceal something worse. This is how Guénon expresses it. But here we will introduce some particular considerations, arguing that there are sufficient indications that even in the West there are or have been people in possession of effective initiatory knowledge without having affiliated themselves with either the Companionship or Freemasonry.

Leaving this fact aside, we will say, with regard to the Fellowship, that it is a residual initiatory organization, of corporate origin and very limited scope, whose name outside France is almost completely unknown. We do not have sufficient information to comment on this, and we do not believe it is worthwhile. But as for Freemasonry, things are different. René Guénon may have seen some surviving remnants of the old “operative” Freemasonry, cut off from what Freemasonry is today. As for the latter, it has—at least as far as four-fifths of it is concerned—absolutely nothing initiatory about it, being a fanciful system of degrees built on the basis of an inorganic syncretism, to the point that it more accurately represents what Guénon calls “pseudo-initiation.”

Beyond this artificial edifice, what can be found in modern Freemasonry, endowed with a “non-human” character, is at best highly suspect; various circumstances make it legitimate to assume that this is properly an organization whose truly spiritual element has been “removed” and in which the “psychic” has often served as an instrument of dark forces. If we maintain the principle of judging by the fruits, recognizing the accuracy of the “direction of effectiveness” of Freemasonry in the modern

world, its constant revolutionary action, its ideology, its struggle against all positive forms of authority from above, and so on, cannot but raise doubts about the nature of the hidden background of the organization in question, when it is not reduced to a pure and simple imitation of initiation and the initiatory hierarchy.

René Guénon is not at all inclined to accept an interpretation of this kind. But that is not the decisive point on the question. Even if he does not attempt to “lead or steal members from any organization,” the responsibility he indirectly takes on with such considerations is entirely his own, and we cannot share it, even in the slightest degree.¹ Thus, given such a balance, the practical problem, within the framework of “pure initiatic regularity,” appears rather bleak for Western man. It is worth looking at other legitimate and well-founded avenues that may be considered to shed some light on the problem.

Initiation and Exceptional Pathways

The merit that must be recognized in Guénon's conception is the emphasis he places on the difficulty of initiatic realization under present conditions and the fact that he sets a limit against certain approaches concerning “individual initiation” and “self-initiation,” presented by some—Rudolf Steiner among them—as the only path that Western man should follow. It is important not to fall from one extreme to another.

It is absolutely true that, due to the process of involution to which humanity is subject, some possibilities of direct realization, present at the origins, although not totally lost, have at least become rare. But we must not fall into positions equivalent to the Christian conception, according to which man, irremediably damaged by “original sin,” can do nothing by himself in the strictly supernatural realm; here the inseparable intervention of the one who can ritually transmit the “spiritual influences,” the basis of everything, according to Guénon, appears as equivalent to “grace” and the “sacraments.”

Another important consideration should be made. Guénon himself, in another book, has pointed out that one of the aspects of specific involution is a solidification, whether it be that which is provoked today in the present reality under the rigid forms of a soulless materiality, or—we would add—that which determines an inner closure of the human individual. It must be assumed that under such conditions, the power and, consequently, the help proper to “subtle influences” in the domain of rites, not only initiatory but even religious, is more than reduced and

even null in the cases given. It would be necessary, in fact, to ask ourselves finally what the nature of these “spiritual influences” is and whether those who, as “virtual initiates,” possess them are not thus protected from all kinds of doctrinal errors and deviations. We know of many cases of people—and not only Westerners—whose situation is truly in accordance with “initiatic regularity” in the Guénon sense of the term (and, first and foremost, all Freemasons), but who show such incomprehension and confusion about everything that is truly esoteric and spiritual that they appear far inferior to people who have not received this gift but are endowed with a fair intuition and a sufficiently open mind. Here too, one cannot avoid judging according to the criterion “I will judge them by their fruits,” and we should not delude ourselves about the spiritual “influences” in question, in the current state of affairs.

That said, as a general and decisive consideration, it is important to keep in mind the following: the man who has been born in the present age is a man who has accepted what theosophists would call a “collective karma”: he is a man who has associated himself with a “race” which “has wanted to be born by itself,” freeing itself from the ties that served only to sustain and guide it, and which has allowed itself to be led astray; following this path, it has gone only to meet its own ruin, and this is known to all who can understand the face of modern civilization. But the fact remains the same: today, in the West, we find ourselves in an environment in which spiritual forces have withdrawn and in which the individual cannot count on them very much, unless, thanks to a happy combination of

circumstances, he knows how to open up a path for himself to some extent. In this, nothing has changed.

Finding ourselves in a situation that is in itself an anomaly, practically also in the realm of initiation, it is advisable to consider less the regular paths than those that are exceptional in nature. This is admitted to a certain extent by Guénon himself. Spiritual centers, he says, although in ways that are extremely difficult to define, can intervene beyond the forms of regular transmission, either in favor of particularly qualified individuals who find themselves isolated in an environment where obscurity has reached such a point that almost nothing traditional remains and initiation cannot be obtained, or for a general or exceptional purpose, such as renewing an initiatory chain that has been accidentally interrupted. There are therefore non-normal possibilities of direct “contacts.” But René Guénon adds that it is essential to remember that even if an apparently isolated individual achieves real initiation, this initiation will only be spontaneous in appearance, because in fact it will always indicate a link, by whatever means, with an effectively existing chain: a link “on the vertical,” that is, as an inner participation in the supra-individual principles and states of which every particular organization of men is but a sensible manifestation and, in a certain sense, merely a contingent externalization.² Therefore, in the cases in question, the question can always be asked: is it really the intervention of a center that has determined the initiation, or, on the contrary, is it the active initiative of the individual to want to advance to a certain point that has provoked this intervention?

In this regard, we can speak of a qualification that does not entirely fall within those indicated by Guénon, an active qualification, created through a special discipline, by a special individual preparation that makes one not only eligible, but in certain cases also capable of imposing the choice and initiation. The symbol of Jacob wrestling with the angel, to the point of forcing him to bless him, like so many others, to that of Parsifal (in Wolfram von Eschenbach) who opens the way to the Grail “with weapons in hand,” something “never seen before,” correspond to such a possibility. It is regrettable that in René Guénon's books, there is nothing about what an active discipline of preparation might be, which, in certain cases, is capable of leading, even without interruption, to enlightenment:³ in the same way, René Guénon indicates nothing about specific disciplines with regard to the work of actualization, which transforms the “virtual initiate” into a true initiate and, finally, into an Adept. As we have already said, René Guénon's domain is that of simple doctrine, while the one that interests us is the field of practice.

But in this field, too, René Guénon has on occasion written something that can create confusion. He refers to an Islamic teaching according to which anyone who comes before a “door” without reaching it by the normal and legitimate way sees this door open slightly before him and is then obliged to continue on his way, but not as a mere profane—which would be impossible once he has entered—but as a *sahar* (sorcerer or magician in a lower sense). Certain reservations must be made regarding this approach. First of all, if the person who has managed to

approach this “door” by an unusual route has right and pure intentions, these intentions will certainly be recognized by those who have the right, so that the door will open according to the principle: “Knock and it will be opened to you.” But if the door should not open, this would only indicate that the aspirant to initiation, faced with the test, must open the door himself, resorting to violence, according to the principle that the threshold of Heaven can be violated; for, in general, what Eliphas Levi says is correct, namely that initiatory knowledge is not given, but is taken: which, moreover, constitutes the essence of this active quality that, within certain limits, René Guénon himself recognizes.⁴ Whether one wants to or not, a certain “Promethean” trait will always naturally belong to the highest category of the initiate.

René Guénon is right not to take “astral initiation” seriously and to denounce what certain “occultist” circles think about it in their ramblings. Here too, we must see many points of view that are nothing more than distortions. Apart from the fact that, in any case, true initiation takes place in a condition that is not that of ordinary waking consciousness, it is possible to actively raise oneself to states where the contacts essential for supra-individual development are favored. In Islamic esotericism, for example, there is talk of the possibility of attaining *shath*, a special inner state which, among other things, eventually gives the ability to unite with the *Khîr*, an enigmatic being in whom resides the principle of direct initiation, that is, without the mediation of a *tariqa* (organization) or a *sîlsila* (chain). Although conceived as exceptional, this possibility is admitted. Here, the essential

thing is nyjah, that is, the right intention, which must not be understood in an abstract and subjective sense, but as a magical direction of efficacy.

Let us also consider another point. As we have seen, René Guénon excludes the “ideal” link with a tradition, because “one can only unite with that which has a current existence,” that is, with a chain of which there are still living representatives today according to a regular filiation: without which initiation would be impossible and non-existent. Here too, a curious confusion between the essential element and the contingent and organizing element is evident. What does “current existence” mean, in short? All esotericists know that when a metaphysical principle ceases to have a sensible manifestation in a given medium or in a specific period, it does not thereby become less “current,” but continues to exist on another plane (something that Guénon himself recognizes more or less implicitly). If by “ideal” link we mean a simple mental aspiration, we can agree with Guénon; otherwise, the question of the possibilities of effective and direct evocation is raised on the basis of the magical principle of analogical and syntonetic correspondences. In short, René Guénon admits—with precision—that “spiritual influences” have their own laws. Does this not amount, in essence, to admitting in principle the possibility of a determining action upon them? What can be conceived in a collective situation is a physical chain that can be created and arranged to serve as a body which, on the basis of a “synergy” and, precisely, a “sympathetic” correspondence, attracts a spiritual influence in terms of a “descent” from a plane where the conditions of time and space have no

absolute value. The thing may or may not be achieved, but it should not be excluded, nor confused with the simple and inconsistent “ideal link.”

In short, René Guénon denies that an initiation can take place on the basis of what has already happened in previous existences. Since we admit as little as Guénon the theory of reincarnation, if he refers to it, we agree with him. But this does not exclude what might be called a special “transcendental inheritance” in given individuals, capable of conferring on them a particular “dignity” in terms of the possibility of traversing and reaching, by direct means, initiatic awakening. This has been explicitly recognized by Buddhism. Guénon's image of a plant or a living being that cannot be born when there is no seed (which would be the “beginning,” determined from outside by ritual initiation) is only valid within certain limits. By making it absolute, we would end up contradicting the fundamental metaphysical vision of non-duality and, above all, uniformly referring all beings to a lowest common denominator. For they can carry within themselves the “seed” of awakening.

Current Conditions for Initiation

We have already indicated the essential elements that must be upheld in the face of the unilateral scheme of initiatory “regularity.” In a way, we would risk disqualifying ourselves if we did not recognize the value that this scheme deserves. But it is not necessary to exaggerate and lose sight of the special, even abnormal, conditions in which even those with the best intentions and qualifications find themselves in the West. Who would not join if they found initiatory organizations, as René Guénon conceives them, even with aspects that almost make one think of a bureaucratic system of formal “legality”? Who would not seek them out, simply asking to be judged and “put to the test”? But this is not the case, and anyone who reads Guénon finds himself somewhat in the situation of someone who hears that it would be wonderful to possess a fascinating young woman, but who, when he asks where she is, receives only silence or even “that's not our problem” as an answer. As for the indications given directly by Guénon about what would remain in the West of regular initiatory organizations, we have already expressed the necessary reservations.

There remains only the question which, to tell the truth, we should have raised from the outset, namely that the very idea of ritual initiation, as presented by René Guénon, seems to us to be greatly weakened. In fact, a transmission of poorly individualized “spiritual influences,” a transmission that might not even be perceived, unifying a simple “virtual initiative,” which, in essence, as we have said, is exposed to all errors and deviations, at best, like the

last of the “profane,” a transmission of this kind, in short, is very little. From what we know and from what can be deduced from the precise traditions—including those of the ancient mysteries—real initiation is, on the contrary, comparable to a kind of surgical operation, the counterpart of which is an experience lived in a particularly intense way and leaving, as one text says, “the eternal trace of a fracture.”

Finding someone capable of providing initiation in these terms is not easy, nor does it depend solely on qualifications (given what has already been said, it is advisable today in the West to place various restrictions on the principle that “when the disciple is ready, the Master is also ready”). In this case, it is essentially a question of elements that are, so to speak, “outstanding” (in the military sense), which may or may not be found in life. One cannot be under the illusion of finding a “school” proper, equipped with everything necessary for regular development, with a sufficient system of “safeguards” and controls. The “schools” in the West that presume to be such because they boast of having “initiates” who put their qualifications on business cards or in the yellow pages are vulgar mystifications, and one of Guénon's merits is to have exercised a just destructive criticism.

As for those who, having assumed the karma of the civilization into which they have chosen to be born, and being truly dedicated to their vocation, want to advance on their own, striving to establish direct contacts on the “vertical” —that is, metaphysical contacts—rather than “horizontal” links with organizations that have appeared in

history and would provide them with assistance—they are committing themselves to a dangerous path, a reality that we wish to emphasize explicitly: for everything happens as if they were venturing into a wild country without a “map” or a calling card. But, deep down, if in the profane world it is natural for a person of good birth to risk their life when the end is worthwhile, there is no reason to think otherwise of those who, given the current circumstances, have no other option than to achieve initiation and the abolition of human bonds. “Allah akbar!” one might say with the Arabs, meaning “God is great,” while Plato had already declared: “All great things are dangerous.”

Notes

1. It is equally debatable whether Freemasonry is a “purely Western form of initiation,” as this would require ignoring the entire Hebrew element in its rituals and legends.
2. Furthermore, with regard to the Rosicrucians, Guénon speaks of the community of those who have attained a certain state, superior to that of ordinary humanity, and have obtained the same degree of initiation. Strictly speaking, one should not speak of “societies,” or even “organizations.” On another occasion, Guénon recalled that initiatory hierarchies are nothing more than degrees of being. All this can be understood in a spiritual and metaphysical sense and not in a personalized or organized sense.
3. Such is typically the case with early Buddhist asceticism. Buddhism also has a technical term to designate precisely those who have “awakened themselves.”
4. The principle of “incommunicability” must be understood on this basis. True metaphysical knowledge is always an “act,” and what possesses a quality of “act” cannot come from elsewhere; according to the Greek expression, it can only be attained.
5. One may recall the very important role played by initiation received during sleep among savage peoples. On this aspect, see, for example, Mircea Eliade, “Shamanism and the Techniques of Ecstasy.”⁶ On this point, a text by Abdul Hadi (published in August 1946 in *Etudes Traditionnelles*) speaks of two chains, only one of which is historical, and initiation is given by a living, authorized

master (sheik), who possesses the key to the mystery: it is the *et-talimurrijal*, relying on men, distinct from the *et-talimur-rabbani*, for whom it is not a living master as a man, but an “absent” master, unknown, or even “dead” for many centuries. This second path is referred to by the notion of Khidr (pronounced Ridr, NdT) through whom initiation can be received directly. This possibility has a very particular importance in Ismailism. In the Rusa Cruz, the mysterious figure of “Elías Artista” was, in a certain sense, equivalent to Khidr.

Man and His Future

According to the Vedânta

Julius Evola

The growing interest that our culture shows today in everything Eastern is an undeniable fact and cannot be explained as a simple wave of exotic fashion, but must be related to something much deeper. However, regarding the meaning of this fact, there remains a problem that deserves to be studied much more than it has been until now.

At first, the custom was to dismiss the East with a simple shrug of the shoulders from the heights of a self-importance based essentially on the achievements of our civilization in the fields of materialism and abstract discourse. But, far from this frivolous presumption, someone began to suspect that such domains were perhaps not the ultimate authority after all, and, considering the East with a renewed vision, began to understand its spiritual reality; and at the same time, realizing the critical points toward which the whole of the boastful European civilization gravitates when taken to its ultimate consequences, in addition to recognizing the East, they began to wonder whether it might perhaps offer something that would integrate European civilization itself in order to lead it beyond the crisis toward a higher positivity.

There were even those who fell into the opposite extreme, that is, the idea that the East is like a lifeline or manna from heaven, that everything we have done, from

the Greeks to the present day, is negative, an aberration, a degeneration from which we must above all save ourselves by recognizing it as such and returning to the Eastern and traditional conception of life as prodigal sons.

It is curious to note that many of these people accompany this misunderstanding of the West with a similar one regarding the East itself. That is to say, they see only the most external and deteriorated side of the East, when not falsified; the side that allows them to belittle everything that is scientific seriousness, discipline, will, and conscience, in order to fall into the arms of unbridled rambling and dissolve into feelings, dreams, and empty words. Now, just as materialistic complacency towards the East must be condemned, we believe that the same—if not more—must be done with such an attitude which, for that reason alone, reflects the disintegration of certain elements of our civilization.

We affirm that if the East represents a spiritual reality, so does the West; that therefore they are different terms, both positive, susceptible, if anything, to synthesis, but not to a flat reduction of one to the other. This synthesis does not mean that only the West or the East must prevail, since we believe that such a synthesis, if it is to be fruitful, must take its character precisely from the spirit of Western culture, which is power, an impulse to celebrate and act with the spirit without denying the “world” —the system of determinations and individuations—but rather by wanting it, affirming it, mastering it, and thus realizing it. This is a simple statement of a thesis; for its demonstration, we refer to our writings as a whole, which

can be said to have it as their center of gravity, and specifically to the *Essay on Magical Idealism* (Rome, 1925) and to the first section of *Man as Power*, soon to be published, already published in issues 2, 3, and 4 of the magazine *Ultra*. Here we wish only to consider the work of a French author, René Guénon, and see, through a critical analysis of his theses, what one of the greatest Indian systems, Vedanta, can represent for us.

Guénon has published a series of books that can be divided into two groups. One comprises *Le Théosophisme*, *Introduction générale aux doctrines hindoues* and *Orient et Occident*; the second, the very recent study *L'homme et son devenir selon le Vedânta* (Ed. Bossard, Paris, 1925, 271 pp.), which preludes several others. The first group can be called negative, the second positive, in the sense that the purpose of the former works is: a) To clear the field of all the distortions, misunderstandings, and parodies to which Eastern wisdom has been subjected by certain Western currents; b) To thoroughly criticize Western civilization and show the crisis and ruin that are corroding it as long as it does not adopt a totally different order of values.

In the second series, Guénon sets out to systematically expound traditional Eastern wisdom, which he identifies absolutely and precisely with such an order of values.

With regard to the first point, we cannot but adhere to Guénon's purifying and unmasking work. Commitments, misunderstandings, and digressions such as those of a certain English "spiritualism" and those of Steinerian anthroposophy, along with all the minor neo-mystical tones in the style of Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi, and the

like, can never be treated with sufficient severity and are truly the worst obstacles to a real understanding and integration of East and West. However, we have certain reservations about the means chosen by Guénon for this purpose, which are more *ad hominem* than demonstrative (we are referring to Théosophisme), since instead of taking up the doctrines and showing their intrinsic absurdity, he limits himself to revealing the intrigues of individuals and associations, whose eventual lack of transparency regarding what really matters is nevertheless of little significance. Beyond this, we agree with Guénon on the need for metaphysical knowledge and, therefore, on the level proper to initiatic traditions. This is a point that cannot be emphasized enough. Among Westerners, there is a habit of calling “spiritual” that which is merely an outline, an accessory to a physical state of existence. What matters most, unfortunately, is only the real, concrete relationship with things and beings, a relationship that for men is something extrinsic and contingent, proper to physical perception and the space-time categories that govern it.

As for everything that is discursive knowledge, the heart, mental, moral, devotional world, etc., all of this refers to that same physical state, with all its “superiors” and “inferiors,” “high” and “low,” “divine” and “human,” “good” and “evil,” etc., it does not take a single step beyond that, it does not transform into nothing that which metaphysically, in the order of absolute concreteness, man is (better: the Self is, as man). The spiritual must not be an empty word; it is therefore necessary for man to have the strength to understand it, to face up to everything that he is, feels, and thinks, to put it aside and move forward in a

radical transformation of the relationship according to which one is either with things or with oneself. Such is the metaphysical realization that has been the constant concern of every esoteric tradition, whose roots are intertwined with those of history itself. Guénon reaffirms these demands, and this is to be welcomed. However, he focuses primarily on the negative aspects, that is, more on his ideas about what the metaphysical is not than on his ideas about what the metaphysical is. Certainly, we find ourselves here on rather uncertain ground, since the language coined by material and discursive life offers few possibilities for adequately expressing what is proper to such metaphysics. We therefore believe we can give a rough indication by saying that Guénon's attitude toward the metaphysical suffers from a mentality that we could call rationalist, which we explain as follows: the presupposition of rationalism (rationalism as a philosophical system, that is, and not in its vulgar sense, which in no way can be linked to Guénon) is "ideal objectivity," that is, the belief in laws existing in and of themselves, in principles that are what they are, without any possibility of conversion, fatally and universally, and in the world as something in which everything that is contingency, tension, darkness, arbitrariness, indeterminacy, has no place, since everything is already realized and a higher order brings all the elements together. In this cosmos, the principle is not will and power, but knowledge and contemplation; not domination, but identity. The individual is like an illusory and contradictory shadow if he disappears into the whole. At this deep root, things and laws—whether sensible or not—are what they are and not something else; they are

made of pure contingency that becomes abstraction or, rather, is extinguished in something purely ideal: the interior is therefore realized according to its “Apollonian” or intellectual mode, in which the principle of the self, rather than being reaffirmed in a “being of power,” is abolished. Certainly, these are philosophical expressions that should only be taken as suggestions; suggestions imbued with a particular way of relating to things, in an order that is beyond everything that is philosophical and mental.

That said, Guénon's error consists in believing that such an attitude must represent the last resort, that “metaphysical” and “intellectual” (this term is used by Guénon not in its modern sense but, in a certain way, in the scholastic and Neoplatonic sense) are interchangeable terms, which is debatable. Guénon knows—and we with him—that his conception is linked to a whole tradition of initiatic wisdom; but what he shows himself to be unaware of, or pretends to be unaware of, is that such a tradition is not the only one, that equally beyond all worldly experience and “profane” knowledge—against the tradition of knowledge, contemplation, and union—there is the great tradition of the magical and hermetic sciences, which is nevertheless one of power, individuation, and domination. Hence, rather than attributing to himself a monopoly on initiatic wisdom, as he seems to have done, it would have been advisable for Guénon to have reflected a little more, since beyond the profane and the naive there are those who might ask certain questions and invite him to a revision of ideas that might not be too simple. This is an important point, given that Guénon's particular

attitude towards the spiritual cannot fail to reveal a complete ignorance of everything that the West has achieved in relation to the spiritual proper—even if only in terms of demands and tendencies—and, therefore, the aforementioned reference to the East almost as a lifeline for someone who has nothing and asks for everything. In fact, the Western spirit is specifically characterized by free initiative, affirmation, the value of individuality, a tragic conception of life, and a will to power and action. These elements, while they may be the reflection on the human, external plane of a higher magical value, nevertheless clash with those who desire the universal, impersonal and immobile world of “metaphysical” intellectualism. Let us emphasize the following: in his references to the East itself, Guénon, consciously or not, is necessarily one-sided. In fact, he limits himself to the Vedic tradition, as developed up to the Upanishads and the Vedanta, disregarding several other schools which, although they cannot be easily reduced to it, are no less “metaphysical.” We will mention only the Tantra system and the magical and alchemical currents of Mahayana and Taoism, in which the emphasis is placed precisely on the “power” aspect, which, rather than contradicting it, could offer the West material for a higher reaffirmation. Guénon, in fact, is not unaware of such schools, but considers them “heterodox,” which, for him, is an explicit verdict of condemnation; for us, however—if Guénon will allow us to say so—these are mere words: it remains to be seen whether a doctrine should be called true and elevated because it is traditional, or whether it should be called traditional because it is true and elevated. Here too, Guénon presupposes facts and

evidence, which nevertheless remain perfectly inconclusive—a dogmatic and authoritarian tendency that is reflected throughout his writings, which are otherwise quite appreciable for their clarity and erudition. We can therefore see to what extent Vedanta—which for Guénon would be almost the “metaphysical” system par excellence—can represent something for a Westerner who is not degenerate, that is, who has not lost in critical consciousness and spirit of affirmation what the civilization to which he belongs has achieved, who does not abandon his positions in order to retreat, but who nevertheless wants to carry them forward. But first, a warning is in order. We have pointed out the transcendent nature of metaphysical realization and the difficulty of giving it meaning in terms of the usual categories. But this point—which we have explicitly conceded—must not become a refuge for unbridled, dogmatic, arbitrary, and subjective ramblings. This is precisely what some dilettante “occultists” do: they do not remain silent about what is purely ineffable, but speak out; however, when asked to determine the meaning of their expressions and to realize the difficulties they raise, they turn back and evaporate again into reference to a pure inner intuition, which thus remains a raw fact that does not account for itself, imposing itself somewhat like the taste of one who likes cheese over that of another who prefers strawberries. Consequently, either one remains confined to the initiatory realm, whose self-verifying and communicative systems cannot, except in a few exceptional cases, enter the horizon of a “layman,” or one speaks. But if one speaks, one must stick to speaking correctly, that is, to accounting

for what one says, to respect the logical requirements that are as harmless here as grammatical ones, to show that the object of metaphysical realization, even if only by accident (in its “proper form,” in the pure interiority of the self), provides real satisfaction to all those requirements and problems that in the purely human and discursive realm are destined to remain purely as such. It is too easy, in fact, to solve problems by not presenting them, thus imitating the ostrich that evades danger by hiding its head under its wing. On the contrary, it is necessary to stand firm, face the enemy head-on, and defeat him using his own weapons. We say this to prevent our criticism—if not our work in general—from being accused of having a purely philosophical scope. This is not accurate, first of all, since what is primary for us is a certain “realization” and only afterwards, as a covering, a certain logically intelligible system. But even if this were the case, every expression as such is put to the test of fire by the logos; and if it starts from the suprarational, so much the better, for it will certainly pass this test, since what is superior implies and contains in an eminent way what is inferior. And we hope that Guénon is aware that his book on Vedanta is nothing more than a philosophical exposition. He certainly speaks of something that is not precisely philosophical, but nevertheless he speaks (and this is not his fault, since there is no other possibility, unless one resorts to symbols) philosophically, that is, he strives to present something intelligible and justified. If, therefore, by clinging to this aspect of the question, we demonstrate the relativity of such intelligibility and justification, he, for his part, cannot back down and get out of the way by referring to a higher

traditional metaphysical validity, to which, moreover, and on the same ground, we shall be able to reaffirm our adherence; our philosophical criticisms are nothing more than obedient servants. What, then, does Vedânta say about the world, about man, and about his becoming?

First, there is the optimistic assumption that there is a God, that is, that the contingent and phenomenal whole of things is not the first thing, but only the accidental aspect of a whole that is already perfect and contained in a higher principle. That this is a mere assumption, and that Guénon pays little attention to the Hindu theory of knowledge, everyone can see for themselves simply by knowing that for Hindus, not everything is true, but only insofar as it is currently experienced. In our case, there is no certainty of God outside the experience of the self that has it as its content. Now, since such experience is not immediate and general, but requires a certain process to attain it, there are no demonstrative arguments capable of affirming that God already exists (and therefore that the process is simply re-cognitive) before appearing as a result of this process that has made divine something that was not divine. Let us move on. From this assumption—God or Brahman—the world would be the manifestation. But the concept of manifestation according to Vedanta is extremely ambiguous. In fact, it is said that Brahman in manifestation remains that which is immutable, immobile. Not only that, but manifestation itself (and therefore everything that is particularity, individuality, and becoming) is, with respect to It, something “rigorously null.” It is a modification that in no way alters Him. In Brahman, in eternal and actual presence, all possibilities

exist; manifestation is only an accidental mode that some of them take on. How such proportions can become intelligible is difficult to demonstrate. Note: the Catholic escape route of *ex nihilo* is not valid here, where *nihil* is transformed into a distinct and positive principle, from which creatures are materialized in order to exist and, at the same time (insofar as they are made of “nothing,” of “deprivation”), do not exist. Brahman, however, has nothing outside itself, least of all “nothing.” Things are its modifications: how can one say, then, that they are not? In connection with this: if Brahman is the absolute synthesis of everything, what place is there for a contingent way of considering it? How is it possible for such a mode to arise, such an obscuring of Brahman? How can we fail to notice that the phrase only makes sense if we presuppose the existence of a principle distinct from Brahman, capable precisely of including it in a relative and accidental way, which goes against the main premise? Guénon says (pp. 30-31): “metaphysically, manifestation can only be considered in its dependence on the supreme principle and as a mere support for rising to transcendent knowledge.” We ask ourselves: who is it that rises to such knowledge? Or is it Brahman itself, and then it is necessary to understand, with Eckhart, Scotus Erigena, Hegel, Schelling, and so many others, that the world is the same self-cognitive process of the Absolute—but then it has a value and a reality, and before being a phantom in the face of the pre-existing eternal synthesis, it is the very act by which this synthesis gives itself to itself—or else it is “other” in relation to Brahman, which means making Brahman something relative, “one among two,” contrary

to the hypothesis under consideration. He even adds: “immutable in its own nature, Brahman develops only the indefinite possibilities it carries within itself, through the passage from potency to act... and this without its essential permanence being affected, precisely because this passage is only relative and this development is only development insofar as it is considered from the side of manifestation, outside of which there can be no question of any succession, but only of perfect simultaneity” (p. 36). The difficulty is the same: everything would be fine as long as there were a way to understand how a point of view other than that of the Absolute could exist and coexist with it. But if this is not possible, succession, unfolding, and the rest cannot be called accidental and illusory, but absolutely real. The only refuge would be creationism as *projectio per iatum dei* of Catholic theologians, that is, the divine possibility of separating from itself different centers of consciousness, which can therefore see from the outside what the interior includes in an eternal mode. But even disregarding the logical inconsistency of such a point of view, the fact remains that it is entirely unknown to Hindu wisdom.

Guénon multiplies points of view to explain the antinomies and does not realize that this is a pseudo-solution, or rather a vicious circle, unless one starts from an original dualism, that is, precisely from the opposite of what one wants to arrive at. Transposed to those proper to the different points of view, the oppositions not only remain, but are exacerbated.

Guénon is right when he says (p. 44) that manifestation cannot be separated from its principle without being annulled—hence the profound meaning of the Vedanta and Mahayana doctrines that things are at once real (with reference to their principle) and illusory (if taken in themselves). We do not reproach him for such a separation, but rather for the separation of the principle from manifestation. From saying that, although the world cannot be distinguished from Brahman, Brahman can nevertheless be distinguished from the world (as its free cause), to saying that “manifestation as a whole is rigorously null with respect to its infinity,” there is a considerable leap, which consists in the surreptitious introduction of a very dubious conception of infinity itself. That is: infinity understood as indeterminacy, as that which for each particular can only mean the death of itself. For us, true infinity is not such, although it is its abstract hypostasis, almost the very character of ignorant and impotent being. True infinity is potestas, that is, the energy to be unconditionally what one desires. The Absolute cannot have, like a stone or a plant, a nature of its own (and such would be infinity itself if it were understood as something fatal, immutable, and therefore passive with respect to itself). It is that which wants to be; and what it wants to be is, without doubt, the Absolute, the Infinite. When it manifests itself, it is, consequently, the finite, the individual, etc. Thus, it is no longer the death and contradiction of the Infinite (and therefore a non-being), a nothingness that obscures fullness (*omnis determinatio negatio est*), but on the contrary, Its act, Its glory, that

through which It testifies and affirms in Itself Its powerful freedom.

This point of view reappears in an Eastern school (which Guénon naturally calls “heterodox”): that of the *çakti*-tantra, who direct a criticism at Vedânta whose scope is indisputable. Only by replacing the nebulous and intellectual notions of spirit (*âtma*) and Infinity (Brahman) with the active and concrete notion of power (*çakti*), they say, can the various difficulties inherent in the concept of manifestation be resolved from a non-dualistic point of view. The Absolute is the power of manifestation, the world is its act: therefore, it is real, with a supreme reality. If, on the other hand, the Absolute is understood as an actual infinity existing *ab aeterno*, what place is left for manifestation? Does Guénon not realize the absurdity of the concept that manifestation is the “development” of some “possibilities” present in the supreme principle? In fact, either the term “development” is given meaning, or it is not. In the first case, we would have something that is, at the same time and in the same relation, potentiality and act, which is a contradiction in terms. Such is the “possibility” of which he speaks, since this, insofar as it refers to eventual manifestation, should be in potential, but insofar as it is, on the other hand, a possibility of the supreme principle, it is no longer a possibility but actuality, something already “developed,” since there is nothing in Brahman that is not actual.⁴ It can be seen how Guénon, in his enthusiasm (we would almost say fanaticism) for the East, sees the speck in his neighbor's eye but not the log in his own: in fact, he directs this criticism precisely at Leibnitz's conception (which, naturally, for him is mere

“profane philosophy”) and does not realize that it is rooted in the very foundations of Vedanta.

The contradiction, therefore, only ceases if we consider Brahman no longer as eternal intellectual light, but as pure potentiality which, in the manifested, has not its negation, but its affirmation. And the necessity of such a conception frequently filters through Guénon himself—where he refers to a “divine creative will,” to a “supreme causal principle.” In this way, he approaches coherence—but at the same time, he moves away from Vedanta as it truly is. In fact, Vedanta explicitly states that the Absolute is neither cause nor activity, that cause and activity do not lie in it, but in the unconscious “mâyâ,” from which it follows that when any kind of function is attributed to it (“I cause, I act, I create”), one falls victim to illusion and ignorance. Causality, creation, and everything that is becoming and determination do not, for Vedanta, lie in the Absolute, which is therefore pure existence, indeterminate, deprived of any attribute (nirguna-Brahman), but in the Absolute obscured by maya (saguna-Brahman), maya being an inexplicable and indefinable principle, a “fact” before which one must pause. And between saguna-Brahman and nirguna-Brahman there is an inexhaustible abyss:⁵ one is, the other is not. This is a concept to which Guénon, on the other hand, strictly adheres, thus reaffirming the original abstract conception of the Absolute and the universal.

The originality and, at the same time, the original flaw of Vedanta lies precisely in the separation of the principle of synthesis from what is already synthesized, a separation

that makes the two terms contradictory to each other. While in a consistent non-dualism the universal is the act that comprises the particular as the power from which it is the act and through which it is realized, in Vedanta the universal does not comprehend but excludes the particular, since it cannot comprehend the latter except by denying it in an indeterminate identity, in the mere ether of consciousness (*cit-ākāṣa*), night—to use Hegelian terms—in which all cows are black.

It can be foreseen from now on that, approaching such a view, all meaning of man and his becoming dissolves. The individual, as such, belongs to manifestation and is therefore nothing, a trifle; this is the only rigorous consequence of the premise. It is useless to deny the legitimacy of the individual's assumption of self and therefore to say that the distinction between the Self and Brahman is an illusion of the Self (p. 210), because this is precisely where the problem lies: this illusion is real, and it would be necessary to explain how it arises and how the demonstrated impossibility of duplicating points of view is possible. It is also useless to split the unity of consciousness into an “If” (personality, metaphysical I) and an “I” (individuality, empirical I), since we encounter the same contradictions mentioned above, arising from the presupposition of the absolute heterogeneity between the universal and the particular, between the metaphysical and the empirical. Between this “If” and this “I” there can be no real union (as in a doctrine of potency, where the “If” would be the potency of which the I is the act, or, from another point of view, the opposite), but rather an extrinsic, incomprehensible composition (confirmed,

moreover, by the doctrine of “subtle bodies” as expounded by Guénon), analogous to that of “essence” and “existence” chosen by Scholasticism; and further confirmation of this is given by Guénon himself when he says that the passage from the manifested state to that of Brahman (corresponding to the two principles of man) implies a radical leap (p. 200).

The inconsistency of this opinion (which, among other things, with regard to “salvation” or “liberation” should coherently lead to the Christian mystery of “grace”) of Vedanta has been expertly demonstrated by the Tantras. They make the following argument to the Vedantins: “You say that the only thing that is truly real is the immobile Brahman without attributes, and that the rest—the whole of conditioned beings—is illusion and falsehood. Now answer: who are you who affirm this, Brahman or a conditioned being? For if you are a conditioned being (and you cannot honestly say otherwise), you are illusion and falsehood and, consequently, all that you say and your own affirmation will be all the more illusory and false, since only Brahman is, and the rest is illusion.”

Moreover, the very concept of “conditioned being,” with which Guénon defines man and other “manifestations” similar to him, leads once again to the dilemma already indicated. In fact, either one admits a distinct principle, capable of experiencing certain conditions, as opposed to a conditioning power, but that is radically contrary to the whole spirit of Vedanta, or else one denies the distinction, and then the conditioned and the conditioning become one and the same thing:

Brahman, which in the various beings is determined in one way or another. Therefore, there is nothing relative and dependent; on the contrary, everything is absolute, everything is freedom. And here, once again, there is no room for the solution of points of view. It makes no sense to speak of a point of view of the creature who lives as condition and dependence that which for Brahman is not such: the point of view can only be one, that of Brahman. And it is Brahman who rejoices and grieves in the various beings and in the yogis prepares to give Himself His own "liberation." Such is the point of view of the tantras (and, with them, of all Western immanentism), which, however, cannot be that of Vedanta, precisely because for Vedanta the Absolute as immanent cause is illusion and between it and the relative and "manifest" there is discontinuity, a radical leap. Therefore, the world is nothing, man is nothing, and the becoming of man is that of a nothingness that resolves itself into nothingness. What is in fact the meaning of such a development according to Vedanta? A reabsorption of the concrete state of existence into the subtle state of existence and, after that state, into the unmanifest, where individual conditions (laws, determinations) are finally totally canceled out. It is not, therefore, as Guénon himself says (p. 175), an "evolution" of the individual, since the end is "the reabsorption of the individual into the unmanifest state," from the point of view of the individual it would be more accurate to call it an "involution." We go further, however, conceiving manifestation as the act of the Absolute (always remember that it is impossible to duplicate points of view). We would say that such a becoming is truly a coming to less of the

Absolute itself in its act, its repentance; regression, degeneration, and not progression.

For the rest, it is doubtful whether Guénon's and the Vedanta's ideas on this point are clear. In fact, regarding "reabsorption," there is also talk of an identification of the Self with Brahman, in which, however, it is not lost in any way (p. 233), and of a "resolution" that is more transformative than annihilating, since it leads to an expansion beyond all limits and realizes the fullness of possibilities (pp. 196-97); This ambiguity reflects the conflict of an internal, spiritual experience, valid in itself, which has not found an adequate logical body in which to express itself, as it is distorted by a limited and ecstatic conception, such as that of the abstract universalism of Vedanta. In any case, the main difficulty remains: whatever the direction, does human becoming have a value, a cosmic value? In short, why must I become, transform myself? Once again, there is no escape from the different points of view. With regard to the infinite, considered as existing *actualiter et tota simul ab aeterno*, as rigorously identical to itself in any state or form, everything that is the becoming of "conditioned beings" cannot have any real meaning; it cannot realize Brahman in more, just as its non-becoming could not realize it in less. Brahman is, and can only be, indifferent: whether it is the state of a brute (*paçā*), that of a hero (*vîra*) or that of a god (*deva*), for Him they must be perfectly the same thing, and therefore progress from one of these states to another, from His point of view, cannot have any meaning or justification. On the contrary, strictly speaking, one cannot speak of progress and regression, but only of passage; but not even that, since becoming itself is

an illusion referred to a point of view other than that of Brahman.

Everyone can see what practical consequences follow from this. We are presented with two options: either a passive and stupefied contemplation of the incomprehensible succession of states, or a utilitarian morality. Utilitarian because the motivating force behind the eventual development and transformation of man could not be connected to a cosmic value, in the sense that the world, God himself, demands something that does not exist except through the “I,” and that could only be justified in terms of personal utility, of the convenience that certain particular states of existence can offer the individual. But this is not enough. From the point of view of a coherent Vedanta, such moral defeatism ensues that it cannot even justify a utilitarian ethic. This is because the passage through a hierarchy of states to the unmanifest Brahman, which a particular being can achieve through the long, harsh, austere process of self-transcendence characteristic of Yoga, is nothing more than a kind of acceleration of something that will happen naturally to all beings. It is “immediate liberation” rather than “deferred liberation,” where everything boils down to a question of... patience. In fact, the Vedanta view is that the world, coming from unmanifest states, plunges back into them at the end of a certain period, and this happens over and over. At the end of such a period, all beings, whether they like it or not, will therefore be liberated, “restored.” Hence a new negation: not only is there no real and suprapersonal justification for such a development, but freedom itself is, according to this view, denied: beings are ultimately fatally

destined for “perfection.” (we believe it is permissible to give this attribute, this “relativity” to the unmanifest with respect to the manifest, since we are not so non-dualistic as to fail to distinguish between the two); this view contrasts with many others in Hindu wisdom—especially Buddhism—in which, on the contrary, a tragic sense of existence is very much alive, the conviction that if man does not become his own savior, no one will ever be able to save him, that only his will can remove him from the destiny of generation and corruption (*samsâra*) in which he would otherwise remain for eternity.

We believe that no further explanation is needed to convey the meaning of what Vedânta wants to say. The truth is that this is not what we want at all. And if a “layman” were to tell us that, if this is “metaphysics”—the nihilism of reality, values, and individuality—he would not know what to do with it, as it would be neither sufficient nor useful to him, we would truly not know how to prove him wrong. Certainly, we have neglected some of the positive elements contained in Vedanta (although this does not mean that the negative elements already found cease to be such), either because these elements do not constitute the most specific aspect of Vedanta, but are common to other esoteric traditions, especially those we have called magical, or because we must insist on the negative aspects of the East against those who, like Guénon, do not want to see anything positive in the West. Please note the following: the author of this article has the utmost respect for the East and has forged much deeper ties with it than might appear at first glance. However, he cannot and does not wish to proceed dogmatically: both the East and the

West must be subjected to a critique that, in one or the other, separates the positive from the negative. Only after such a separation—in truth, with a spirit free of prejudice and more or less feminine polemical obsessions—can one think of such a synthesis, which may be a matter of life and death for one culture or the other.

In this regard, two points seem fundamental to us. Rational consciousness, the purely logical and discursive level—in which Western civilization has reached its peak—has been surpassed. But what truly lies beyond the concept is not “feeling,” nor is it morality, devotion, contemplation, or “intellectual” identification. What lies beyond the concept is undoubtedly power. Beyond the philosopher and the scientist is not the saint, the artist, or the contemplative, but the magician: the ruler, the Lord. Secondly, extroverted consciousness, lost in the material world and making it the ultimate reality, is transcended. But this overcoming must not consist of access, detachment, escape from reality, dreamy faith in the heavens, and intellectual immersion in the supreme identity: it must be, on the contrary, the immanent resolution of the world in value, a spirit that makes reality the very expression of the perfection of its actuality. The reality of the world is recognized, in truth, as the very place where a god is drawn from a man and a “sun” from the “earth.”

These two demands find their best expression in two maxims which, incidentally, we do not draw—as we could do—from “profane intellectual philosophy,” but from an Eastern metaphysical system, that of the Tantras:

“Without çakti (= power), liberation is mere mockery.”

“O lady of Kula! In Kuladharmā (the tantric path of power), enjoyment becomes perfect realization (yoga), evil becomes good, and the world itself becomes the place of liberation.”

On Hindu Metaphysics —

A Necessary Correction

René Guénon

In the article that appeared in these same pages (pp. 21-24 of 1925) regarding our book on Vedanta (*L'homme et son devenir selon le Vedanta*, Bossard, Paris, 1925), J. Evola made a number of rather unusual errors; we would not have pointed them out if they concerned only us, but, and this is much more serious, they concern the interpretation of the doctrine itself that we have expounded, and therefore we cannot let them pass without providing a correction.

Previously, in an article published in the magazine *Ultra* (September 1925), Evola had incidentally taken up the defense of contemporary Western science, whose inadequacy he nevertheless acknowledges in certain respects, while at the same time calling us “rationalist.” This mistake, verified in connection with a book (*Orient et Occident*), in which we had denounced rationalism as one of the main modern errors, is truly surprising. We now see that the reproach of “rationalism” is directed at Vedanta itself; it is true that this word is perhaps distorted from its true meaning, and that in any case the definition given of it, in terms visibly borrowed from German philosophy, is far from clear. However, the matter is quite simple: rationalism is a theory that places reason above everything else, that seeks to identify it, either with the whole of

intelligence or at least with the highest part of intelligence, and that therefore denies or ignores everything that goes beyond reason. This is a type of conception proper to philosophy, and therefore specifically modern; Descartes is the first authentic representative of rationalism. We do not see how it could be anything other than this, especially since Evola is careful to specify that he intends to speak of “rationalism as a philosophical system”; now, Vedanta has nothing in common with any “philosophical system,” and we have frequently pointed out that Western labels cannot in any way be applied to Eastern metaphysical doctrines.

In truth, Evola is much closer than we are to admitting the claims of rationalism, because he refuses to see a difference between reason and what we have called pure intellectuality; he thus demonstrates that he is completely ignorant of the latter, even though he asserts the opposite in a rather imprudent manner. If he dislikes the expression “pure intellectuality,” let him propose another to replace it; but with what right does he claim that it, in the sense in which we use it, means anything other than what we have intended to designate by it? We continue to maintain that metaphysical knowledge is essentially “supra-rational,” for it is either such or it is not, and the only logical result of rationalism is the denial of metaphysics. Here, on the other hand, is another and no less deplorable error concerning the nature of this metaphysical knowledge, for, according to Hindu doctrine, we speak of pure knowledge and “contemplation.” Evola imagines that this is a purely “passive” attitude, whereas it is exactly the opposite. One of the fundamental differences between the metaphysical path and the mystical path is that the former is essentially

active, while the latter is essentially passive; and this difference is analogous, in the psychological order, to the difference between will and desire. Note well that we say analogous and not identical, first because we are dealing with knowledge and not action (action should not be confused with activity), and second because what we are talking about is absolutely outside the domain of psychology, but it is nonetheless true that the will can be considered the initial motor of metaphysical realization, and desire the motor of mystical realization. This, moreover, is all we can concede to Evola's "voluntarism," whose attitude in this regard is certainly not metaphysical or, however one may think, initiatory. The influence exerted on him by German philosophers such as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche is quite striking, much more so than that of Tantra, behind which he hides, but which he does not seem to understand any better than Vedanta and which he sees more or less as Schopenhauer saw Buddhism, that is, through Western conceptions. The will, like everything human, is nothing more than a means; only knowledge is an end in itself; of course, we are talking here about knowledge par excellence, in the true and complete sense of the word, "supra-individual" knowledge, then "non-human," according to the Hindu expression, which implies identification with what is known. On this point, Vedanta and Tantra, for those who understand them well, are in perfect agreement; certainly, there are differences between them, but these concern only the means of realization; why does Evola strive to find an incompatibility that does not exist between these different points of view? He would do well to refer to what we have

said about the darshanas and their relationships in our Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues. Each person can follow the path that suits him best, the one most suited to his nature, because they all lead to the same end, and once the domain of individual contingencies has been overcome, the differences disappear.

We know at least, as Evola does, that there are similar initiatory traditions, which are precisely these various paths we have alluded to; but they differ only in their outward forms, and their substance is identically the same, because Truth is one. Naturally, we are talking about true “orthodox” traditions, the only ones that interest us; this notion of orthodoxy has not been understood by our opponent, even though we have taken the precaution of specifying on several occasions in what sense it should be understood, and of explaining why, in this field, orthodoxy and truth are one and the same thing. We were stunned to see him assert that, for us, Tantra, Mahayana... and Taoism are “heterodox”! And yet we have stated as clearly as possible that the latter represents, in the Far East, pure and integral metaphysics! And in *L'homme et son devenir selon le Vêdânta*, we have also quoted a fairly large number of Taoist texts to show their perfect agreement with Hindu doctrine; has Evola not noticed this? It is true that Taoism is neither “magical” nor alchemical, contrary to what he supposes; we wonder where he could have got such an illusory idea. As for Mahayana, it is a transformation of Buddhism through the reincorporation of certain elements borrowed from orthodox doctrines; this is what we have written against Buddhism proper, which is eminently

heterodox and anti-metaphysical. Finally, as for Tantra, a distinction must be made: there are a multitude of tantric schools, some of which are in fact heterodox, at least partially, while others are strictly orthodox. Until now, we have never had the opportunity to explain ourselves on this question of Tantra, but Evola, incidentally, only very imperfectly grasps the meaning of “Shakti.” He has undoubtedly failed to notice that we quite often affirm the superiority of the Shaivite point of view over the Vishnuite point of view; this might have opened up other horizons for him.

Naturally, we will not dwell here on detailed criticisms, which all stem from the same misunderstanding; moreover, we are not at all convinced of the usefulness of certain discussions using methods borrowed from profane philosophy, which really have no place outside that sphere. It has long been known that there are things that are not open to discussion; one must limit oneself to presenting the doctrine as it is, for those who are capable of understanding it, and this is what we intend to do to the best of our ability. Those who truly seek knowledge should never be denied the clarifications they request, if it is possible to provide them and if they are not absolutely inexpressible; but if someone approaches with a critical and argumentative attitude, “the doors of knowledge must be closed to him”; on the other hand, what would be the point of explaining something to someone who does not want to understand? We invite Evola to meditate on these few principles of conduct, which are common to all truly initiatory schools in the East and West. We will limit ourselves to highlighting a few examples of manifest

misunderstanding: Evola speaks of the identification of the “I” with Brahman, whereas it is the “Self” and not the “I” that is meant, and if this fundamental distinction is not grasped from the outset, nothing that follows can be grasped either. He believes that Vedanta considers the world to be “nothing,” following the erroneous interpretation of Westerners, who think they are translating the theory of “illusion” in this way, whereas this reality is relative and participatory, as opposed to reality that belongs only to the Supreme Principle. He translates “subtle state” as “subtle body,” whereas we have already pointed out that this could in no way refer to “bodies,” contrary to the illusory conceptions of occultists and theosophists, and, moreover, in the whole of formal or individual manifestation, the “subtle state” is precisely opposed to the “corporeal state.” He also confuses “salvation” and “liberation,” even though we have explained that these are two essentially different things and do not refer in any way to the same state of being (pp. 187 and 218 of our work); and there is still something else: he writes that for Vedanta, “at the end of a certain period, all beings, by degree or by force, will be liberated,” whereas we have quoted (p. 191) a text that says the opposite in a sufficiently explicit manner: “In the dissolution (pralaya) of the manifested worlds, the being is submerged in the bosom of the Supreme Brahma; but even then, it can be united with Brahma in the same way as in deep sleep (that is, in the absence of the full and effective realization of the Supreme Identity).” And, to avoid misunderstandings, we will add an explanation of the comparison made here with deep sleep, which indicates that in such a case there is a

return to another cycle of manifestation, from which it follows that the state of being in question is not in fact “liberation.” It must be said that Evola, despite his intention to discuss our book, has read it only very distractedly!

To speak frankly, we would say that what Evola lacks above all is a clear awareness of the distinction between the initiatory point of view and the profane point of view; if he had this awareness, he would not constantly mix them up as he does, and no philosophy would have any influence on him. We know well that he will respond, as he has already made clear, that he takes philosophical language only as a simple means of expression; he is probably sincerely convinced that this is so, but nevertheless, for our part, we do not entirely believe him. Moreover, the simple fact of choosing, among all possible means of expression, the least appropriate, the most inadequate, the least capable of expressing the things in question, because these things belong to a very different order than that for which it is specially made, this simple fact, we say, demonstrates a most deplorable lack of discernment. The most extraordinary thing is that Evola asserts that our book on Vedanta “is nothing more than a philosophical exposition,” adding that he “hopes we are aware of this.” (we wonder what this matters to him); on the contrary, we formally deny this, because nothing could be more opposed to our intentions, which we should know better than anyone, than to speak “philosophically” about matters that have no relation to philosophy; and we repeat once again: no expression—verbal or otherwise—has for us anything more than an exclusively symbolic value.

We have always sought to place ourselves on purely metaphysical and initiatory ground, and no one can remove us from it, not even criticism formulated on a different ground, which, for that very reason, necessarily misses the mark. Evola has no doubt that the questions do not in fact present themselves in the same way for him and for us, and that certain philosophical difficulties he raises have no metaphysical meaning, since the very terms in which they are expressed no longer correspond to anything when one attempts to transpose them to a higher order. We will add only one final observation: it is not for Evola to say that “we would have done better to reflect a little more” on certain things, because he did not work and reflect, as we did, on these questions for more than fifteen years before deciding to publish his first book. He is very young, and this undoubtedly excuses him; he still has much to learn, but he has time ahead of him and may perhaps learn it... provided, of course, that he changes his attitude and does not imagine that he already knows everything.

Concluding Note

Julius Evola

We would like to point out the following to Guénon:

1) Before using a word, we are accustomed to defining it. Now, we have defined as rationalist any attitude that “believes in laws that exist in themselves, in principles that are what they are, incontrovertibly; that understands the world as something in which everything that is contingency, tension, darkness, arbitrariness, indeterminacy, has no place.” Let Guénon tell us if he thinks otherwise or if, on reflection, he remains within the realm of Vedanta; otherwise, his protest remains hollow. And that metaphysical realization is essentially supra-rational (in the totally empirical sense of reason used by Guénon) does not seem to us to be more resolutely affirmed by someone who, like us, has written to reach only “those who have the strength to take in everything that is, feels, and thinks; to grasp it and move forward.”

2) If Guénon understands “intellectual realization” (with which he interchanges metaphysics) as “something essentially active,” reflecting, in a certain sense, the mode of the will, we certainly withdraw the reservation made in this regard (advising him, however, to use the term “pure actuality”) to reaffirm it, nevertheless, when he speaks of a will that has no end in itself, but in knowledge. And with regard to “knowledge” also meaning “identification with the known object,” for our part, beyond this, we affirm a higher value: mastery over the known object. And if it

pleases Guénon to believe that our “voluntarism” has nothing initiatory or metaphysical about it (almost as if the power we are talking about were the muscular will of men!), let him believe so; we can do nothing since, as he himself says, there is no way to make someone understand who does not want to understand; and since he threatens to “close the doors of knowledge,” we close the doors to something we value far more than his knowledge or anyone else's.

3) It is not the case here to discuss a rectification of the various Eastern schools and their “orthodoxy”; for example, we have referred Guénon's judgment of heterodoxy not to Mahayana and Taoism themselves, but to magical and alchemical currents within these schools which, if Guénon (as it seems) does not know, we can make known to him whenever he wishes. We would simply point out that Guénon has not answered our fundamental question: whether a doctrine is accepted as true simply because it is traditional, or whether we leave it to the doctrine itself to judge the value of the traditional nature of the immanent truth. The fact that Guénon remains firm in a pure authoritarianism that accredits itself in order to save the unity of the initiatic traditions creates a vicious circle: he defines a priori as non-initiatory, profane, philosophical, etc., all those directions that do not coincide with his taste or conception. As for our alleged misunderstanding of Hindu wisdom, and especially Tantric wisdom, we are sufficiently assured of this thanks to people who have had direct and intimate relations with it, because the insinuations that Guénon advances, with great frivolity

and without the slightest proof, leave us perfectly unmoved.

4) As for the relationship or mixture between philosophy and esotericism, we would ask Guénon (and, along with him, those who read us) to reread what we have written on this subject in the essay in question. But here too, there is none so deaf as those who will not hear. We have said, for example, that the “transcendent character” of metaphysical realization must not become a refuge for unbridled, dogmatic, and arbitrary subjective ramblings; we have spoken of “some good spirits who are dilettantes in occultism” (watch out for those concerned!), who “do not remain silent on the purely ineffable, but speak; however, when asked to determine the meaning of their expressions and account for the difficulties they raise, they turn back and evaporate again into reference to a pure inner intuition, which thus remains a brute fact that does not account for itself, which thus imposes itself a little like the taste of one who likes cheese as opposed to another who prefers strawberries”; we have therefore presented the dilemma: “either one remains locked in the initiatory environment or one speaks. But if one speaks, one must speak correctly, that is, respect logical requirements, show that the object of metaphysical realization, even if only accidentally, gives real satisfaction to all those requirements and problems which, in the purely human and discursive sphere, are destined to remain purely as such.” Now, Guénon not only speaks, but also writes, and addresses a whole audience, a whole culture that he criticizes. Consequently, he cannot back down, he cannot change the subject, he cannot escape the conditions of that sphere.

This is entirely abstract from what we may represent in a sphere that is not precisely reducible to this, and for which we feel no need whatsoever to ask Guénon for any recognition. To the fundamental difficulties objectively highlighted by us in the Vedanta and in Guénon's exegesis of it, to the pseudo-solution of the antinomies with the points of view, to the absurdity of pure transcendent actuality, of the theory of "lesser reality" and "conditioned being," to the nihilism of all value, of all meaning in manifestation and in becoming, Guénon has not answered a single word but, on the contrary, has believed himself to conclude with external and almost grammatical pseudo-rectifications, which have nothing to do with the crux of the argument, and then to take as "manifest misunderstandings of elements of the doctrine what is simply the critical deepening that certainly cannot respect the naive and provisional form in which they are given" (referring to the distinction between the "I" and the "self," to illusion as "lesser reality," to the subsistence of unidentified beings in pralaya, etc.).

We may, moreover, take note of the statement he makes after we have explicitly told him that for us "philosophical" does not mean something "that is presented in an intelligible and justified manner." It is therefore an unintelligible and unjustified work by the explicit declaration of its author. This leaves us rather perplexed in that, on the one hand, the author declares that "after all, he knows his own intentions better than anyone else," and, on the other hand, we certainly feel (perhaps because, if we believe Guénon, we have not read the volume carefully) to make such an assessment of

Guénon's writing, for whom we have considerably more esteem than he perhaps supposes and believes necessary to reciprocate.

We agree on the limited usefulness of certain controversies on specific issues, especially when these, rather than eliminating misunderstandings, serve to add to those of one party at least as many of the other. We, of course, still have much to learn, just as we have much to teach. From this it follows that, although we believe that the argument of those who reproach us for our age (without knowing anything precise, however) is not valid, we can respond that they should envy us for having time to learn that the gray hair of others, who at least have the same need, does not allow. And, as far as attitude is concerned, it is perhaps more appropriate to change those who feel the need to speak *ex cathedra*, from the platform of an intolerant and dogmatic authoritarianism, certainly more befitting a Protestant pastor than the serious scholar of initiatory matters that, with the necessary reservations, we continue to recognize in Guénon.

Notes

1. "Initiation and Spiritual Realization," Turin, *Rivista di Studi Tradizionali*, 1967.

2. It is obvious that such a point of view, if we may express it thus, is not based, as is the case with systems of thought and philosophy, on any faculty of a formal order, but on the intuitive evidence of absolute Reality, which Guénon has called the "sense of eternity," although, if we want to be rigorous, the latter does not correspond exactly to the intuition of the Absolute Principle, devoid of "aspects" and transcendent to any determination.

3. While acknowledging Evola's doctrinal and terminological purification with respect to his youthful positions, a certain congenital and latent allergy to pure Metaphysics has never ceased to exert a gloomy influence that could be described as a closure towards certain spiritual insights.

4. Please note: the criticism made is intended to eliminate the difficulty of these contradictory aspects present in the same thing by referring them to two different points of view.

5. Attempts at reconciliation, tending, for example, to conceive the immobility of the Absolute as that of the Aristotelian "unmoved mover," although they find their basis in other Eastern schools, cannot, however, be correctly applied in Vedanta.